Voices and Roles of Competing Groups of Elite Women in Siam's Political and Social Transitions, 1868-1942

Natanaree Posrithong

April 2015

This is a dissertation submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy of The Australian National University

I, Natanaree Posrithong, declare that,

Unless otherwise acknowledged in the text,

This dissertation represents the original research of the author.

N. Posrithong.

Acknowledgements

I am using this opportunity to first express the deepest appreciation to my committee chair Professor Peter Jackson, who has guided and inspired me throughout the production of this dissertation. Without his supervision and constant help, this dissertation would not have been possible.

I would like to thank Dr. Jane Ferguson for providing suggestions on the topic of this dissertation, especially at the early stage of this project. Her comments gave me a great encouragement for the writing of this thesis. I also thank Professor Robert Cribb for allowing me to sit in his graduate course on Lies, Conspiracies, and Propaganda during my first year as a Ph. D. student. Your lectures have opened up my perspectives and helped me construct the arguments of this dissertation.

This research would not be possible without financial support from my home institutions, Mahidol University and Mahidol University International College. In the same regard, I am also grateful to have received the ANU Vice Chancellor's Travel Grant, the Empowering Network for International Thai Studies (ENITS) Scholarship, and the Thai Studies Field Research Grant from the Asia Institute, University of Melbourne, for conducting productive fieldwork for this research in Thailand in 2012.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Saowapha Viravong and Jane Hodgins, who have also become my Canberran friends, for their assistance with my preliminary research at the National Library of Australia. I am thankful for their genuine friendship throughout my time in Canberra. In addition, I would like to acknowledge with much appreciation of the editorial input of this dissertation of Maxine McArthur of the School of Culture, History, and Language at ANU.

Last but not least, I thank my beloved family and friends, who have been there for me throughout this journey. Words cannot express how grateful I am to my family, including my brother, sister-in-law, and aunt Mong for always being my support in the moments that I most needed. Without their constant words of encouragement, I would not have completed this dissertation. A final special word of thanks goes to both of my parents, Natthaseth and Jinnapat Posrithong, who have been my great inspirations and always believe in me.

Abstract

This dissertation studies the pivotal roles and voices of elite women of both aristocratic and commoner backgrounds in the significant period of Siam's political and social transitions from the late absolute monarchy to the early post-revolutionary period between 1868 and 1942. A key focus of this study is the competition between the two groups of aristocrats and commoner women. By analysing representations of women in Thai mainstream and official publications, this dissertation critiques the lack of emphasis on Siamese women's public roles and voices in dominant historiographical discourse. This study presents a counter-argument to these works by demonstrating elite women's agency in the four domains of: state public administration, education, print media, and politics. Siamese women entered the public sphere by taking administrative roles in the royal palace from the late nineteenth century during the absolutist reign of King Chulalongkorn. It was in this period that aristocratic women realised the importance of skills other than domestic training in arts and crafts, and they began initiatives in female public education from the end of the nineteenth century. As the result of women's improved access to education, a new class of commoner elite women emerged in the early twentieth century. These literate commoner women competed against aristocratic elite women in the print industry and in politics from the beginning of the post-absolutist period in the early 1930s. This dissertation highlights the competition between these two groups of women as a distinctive contribution to the field of Thai women's history.

This study is based on analysis of personal memoirs from cremation volumes, archival records, and women's magazines. Through considering these source materials, this dissertation reveals the previously overlooked roles of women in Siam's transition from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy.

Voices and Roles of Competing Groups of Elite Women in Siam's Political and Social Transitions, 1868-1942

Table of Contents

The Competing Voices of Aristocratic and Commoner Women

Women in the Post-absolutist Years

Table of Figures

Chapter I

Chapter II

Chapter III

Appendix I: List of Names

Name	Comment	*Remark*
Ananda Mahidol, King (born 1925, died 1946)	The eighth monarch of the Chakri dynasty who ascended the throne when he was only nine years old (r. 1935-1946). The National Assembly appointed Colonel Prince Anuwatjaturong, Lieutenant Commander Prince Artit Thip-apa, and Chao Phraya Yommaraj (Pun Sukhum) as his regents, while the young king spent most of his time in Switzerland completing his education. He only returned to Thailand in 1946 and died in June of the same year, with conspiracies about the mysterious death of the king following.	
Anirutthewa, (*phraya*) (born 1893, died 1928)	Known as King Vajiravudh's favourite courtier, and who had the title of the Head of Personnel.	
Ap Bunnag, Concubine (*chaochom*) (born 1881, died 1961)	One of the five Bunnag sisters who became King Chulalongkorn's concubines.	
Bowaradej Kritdakon, Prince (*phra-ong chao*) (born 1877, died 1953)	The leader of Baworadej rebellion in 1933, which attempted to restore the absolutist monarchy. Following the failed rebellion, the prince went into exile in Vietnam and Cambodia until 1948.	
Bhuvanadh Chakrabongse, Prince (*chaofa*) (born 1883, died 1920)	The fourth son of King Chulalongkorn and Queen Saowapha. He spent his teenage years in Russia under the guardianship of Tsar Nicholas II. He served as a chief of	

	the army and a founder of the Thai Air Force.	
Bradley, Dan (born 1804, died 1873)	One of the missionaries of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (A.B.C.F.M.) who was an influential figure in the court of Siam from 1835 until his death. He founded the first newspaper in Siam called 'Bangkok Recorder'. He was also known as 'mo Bradley' (doctor Bradley) among the Siamese.	
Bradley, Emily (died 1845)	Wife of Doctor Bradley, who founded one of the earliest schools for Siamese middle class children. While Doctor Bradley was working his way up to establish connections with the court of Siam, his wife opened her house to teach girls in the Thonburi neighbourhood from 1837.	
Bunlong Manichot	Female candidate for district *(tambon)* election in 1933	
Buppha Nimmanhemin, (*momluang*) (born 1905, died 1963)	An aristocratic writer/novelist whose works became popular in the post-absolutist period.	
Chaiyantamongkon, Prince *(phra-ongchao)* (born 1865, died 1907)	A son of King Mongkut and the founder of the first female-oriented magazine *Nari rom* (women's entertainment) in 1888.	
Chantharanipha Thewakun, Princess (*momchao*) (born 1884, died 1945)	One of the students in the first class of Sunanthalai Girl's School.	

Chongchithanom Diskul, Princess (*momchao*) (born 1886, died 1978)	Prince Damrong's oldest daughter and author.	
Chulalongkorn, King (born 1853, died 1910)	The fifth monarch of the Chakri dynasty (r. 1868-1910). He protected Siam from colonisation by launching numerous modern reforms. He believed in the concept of 'siwilai' (civilised) that in order to compete with the West, Siam needed to be seen as an equal in Western eyes. He visited Europe twice, in 1897 and again in 1907.	
Chum, Concubine (*chaochom*)	One of Chulalongkorn's consorts, who accompanied him on his royal visit to Java in 1896.	
Cole, Edna (born 1854, died 1949)	A woman missionary who modernised the former Kunlasatri Wang Lang School to become a profitable private girl's school, renamed as the Watthana Witthaya Academy.	
Damrong Rajanubhab, Prince (*phra-ong chao*) (born 1862, died 1943)	Chulalongkorn's half brother who is also known as the father of Thai history, founder of modern Thai education system, and provincial administration. He was one of the most influential aristocrats during Chulalongkorn's reign.	
Dararatsami, Queen Consort (*phra ratchachaya*) (born 1873, died 1933)	A princess of the Kingdom of Chiangmai who became Chulalongkorn's consort in 1886 amidst the political tensions of the nineteenth century. She was known as the Lao princess of Siam's inner court.	

Ekaterina Ivanova Denitsky (born 1888, died 1960)	A Russian wife of Prince Chakrabongse Bhuvanadh, whom he married in Russia and brought to Siam in 1906. The marriage was considered controversial to the royal family as King Chulalongkorn never acknowledged it.	She was also known as Katya
Eua Sunthonsanan (born 1910, died 1981)	He was a musician/song writer. He was the head of the first Thai modern band *suntharaphon* and worked in the production of a number of nationalist songs for the Department of Propaganda during the period of Phibun's regime.	
Euan Bunnag, Concubine (*chaochom*) (born 1887, died 1927)	She was the youngest of the five Bunnag sisters who became King Chulalongkorn's concubines. She also enjoyed photography and playing the violin.	
Gutzlaff, Carl (born 1803, died 1851)	The German Protestant missionary who arrived in Siam in 1828 during the reign of King Rama the Third	
House, Harriet	Founded Harriet M. House School for Girls, with funds she collected from donors in the USA. This school was later known with the name Kunlasatri Wang Lang	
Iem Bunnag, Concubine *(chaochom)* (born 1873, died 1952)	One of the five Bunnag sisters who became King Chulalongkorn's concubines. She served the king as his personal masseuse.	
Jirawat Phibunsongkhram (born 1921)	Daughter of General Phibun and La-iad Phibunsongkhram	
Kham, Lady (*mom*)	Sut's female sexual partner that the author *Khun* Suwan described in her poem *Phleng Yao Mom Pet Sawan.*	

Khuang Aphaiwong (born 1902, died 1968)	He was one of the main founders of the Democrat Party (*Prachathipat*) in 1946 and served as a prime minister for three brief terms in 1944, 1946, and 1947.	
Kittiyakon-Waralak, Prince (*phra-ong chao*) (born 1874, died 1931)	Son of King Chulalongkorn and *Chaochom* Uam who served as a General Secretary (*athibodi*) of the Department of Education late in Rama the Fifth's reign.	
La-iad Phibunsongkhram (born 1903, died 1984)	As the wife of Field Marshall Phibun, she was actively involved in promoting her husband's policies, especially the Cultural Mandates. She also led the Council of Women's Culture and became one of the most prominent female politicians in Thai history when she became a member of parliament in 1957.	Her maiden name was Phankrawi.
Lekha Aphaiwong (born 1913, died 1983)	Khuang Aphaiwong's wife, who worked closely with La-iad Phibunsongkhram in promoting nationalist campaigns in the pre-Second World War years. She also entered into politics as a member of the Senate in 1950.	
Leonowens, Anna (born 1831, died 1915)	Served as the governess of the court of Siam from 1862 to 1867 during the reign of King Mongkut. Her memoirs about her experiences in the Bangkok court became famous when they were adapted as a musical called *The King and I.*	
Mani Siriwarasan (born 1915, died 1999)	One of the first Siamese female students who won the government scholarship to study at Oxford University. She recorded the elite life changes during the last	

	absolutist reign of Siam (King Prajadipok, Rama VII) in her detailed autobiography *Life like a dream.*	
Manthana Morakun (born 1923)	A senior artist who worked as a female vocalist of the Department of Propaganda (*Krom Khotsana*) during the promotion of the Cultural Mandates (1938-1941).	
Mongkut, King (born 1804, died 1868)	The fourth monarch of the Chakri dynasty (r. 1851-1868). He admired Western influences and modern developments. He fully opened Siam to free trade with the Western powers by signing the Bowring treaty with Great Britain in 1855.	
Montharop Kommalat, Princess (*momchao*)	She was a student of the first class of Sunanthalai Girl's School in 1892.	
Muean, (*amdaeng*)	The first commoner woman to file a petition to King Mongkut requesting the freedom to choose her own spouse.	
Nangklao, King (born 1787, died 1851)	The third monarch of the Chakri dynasty (r. 1824-1851) who established the first treaty with the West, namely the Burney Treaty in 1825.	
Naphaphonprapha, Princess (*phra-ong chao*) (born 1864, died 1958)	Chulalongkorn's half sister/the General Secretary of the Inner City (Somdet Athibodi)	
Narai, King (born 1633, died 1688)	The king of Ayutthaya from 1656 to 1688. He opened Ayutthaya for trade and diplomatic activities with a number of foreign powers including the Europeans and Persians.	

Niphanopphadon, Princess (*phra ratchathida*) (born 1885, died 1935)	Chulalongkorn's favourite daughter who served as his personal assistant.	
Noah A. McDonald (born 1830)	An American missionary in Siam between 1860 and 1886	
Oep Bunnag, Concubine (*chaochom*) (born 1879, died 1944)	One of the five Bunnag sisters who became King Chulalongkorn's concubines. She attained skills in photography when cameras were first introduced in the inner court of Siam.	
On Bunnag, Concubine (*chaochom*) (born 1867, died 1969)	The eldest of the five daughters of Thet Bunnag, the governor of Petchaburi City, who were gifted as concubines of King Chulalongkorn.	
Pallegoix, Jean-Baptiste (born 1805, died 1862)	Roman Catholic Bishop and Vicar Apostolic of Eastern Siam from France	
Pha-op Posakritsana (born 1912, died 1983)	One of the first female graduates from the faculty of Arts at Chulalongkorn University.	
Phae, Concubine (*chaochom*)	A concubine of King Mongkut.	
Phanni Thanachan	A government volunteer to put down the Baworadej rebellion in 1933	
Phichittrapha Thewakun, Princess (*momchao*) (born 1881, died 1943)	One of the students of Sunanthalai Girl's School, who later became the headmistress of Rajini School.	
Phunphitsamai Diskul, Princess (*momchao*) (born 1895, died 1990)	Prince Damrong's daughter who became an active educator and writer in the post-absolutist period.	
Phunsuk Banomyong (born 1912, died 2007)	She was Pridi Banomyong's wife and one of the earliest female political activists in Thailand. She was kept in custody while	Her maiden name was Na Pomphet

	her husband was in exile during Phibun's regime. She also wrote extensively against the military dictatorship in Thailand.	
Pia Malakun (*chao phraya*) (born 1867, died 1916)	Born in the reign of King Mongkut, he served in the reign of King Vajiravudh as a Minister of Education and carried out major reforms for modern education in Siam.	Also known as *Phraya* Visudhi Suriyasak
Plaek Phibunsongkhram (born 1896, died 1964)	One of the members of the People's Party that overthrew the absolutist regime in 1932 and later became a prime minister of Thailand from 1938 to 1944, and again from 1948 to 1957.	Known as Phibun in most English sources
Prajadhipok, King (born 1893, died 1941)	The seventh monarch of the Chakri dynasty and the last absolutist king of the Siam (r. 1925-1935). After growing criticisms against the monarch, a revolution was carried out by the People's Party in 1932. The king accepted the new constitution but decided to leave for a tour in Europe, where he abdicated the throne in 1935.	
Pridi Banomyong (born 1900, died 1983)	A French-educated Thai politician who was a member of People's Party and an active member of the Free Thai movement during the Second World War. He became prime minister in 1946.	Also known as *Luang* Praditmanutham
Raem Phrommobon (born 1901, died 1998)	A daughter of police colonel *Phraya* Buret Phadungkit. After completing her high school education at St-Joseph Convent in Bangkok, she enrolled at the faculty of Law of Chulalongkorn University and in 1931 became the first Siamese female	

	barrister-at-law. She was a successful business woman and politician.	
Rambhai Barni, Queen (*phra mahesi*) (born 1904, died 1984)	Queen consort of King Prajadhipok (Rama VII)	
Ramrakhop, (*Phraya*) (born 1890, died 1967)	Known as one of King Vajiravudh's favourite courtiers who took the role of the head of the Department of Royal Pages (*Krom Mahatlek*).	
Roem Chanthaphimpha (born 1909)	A graduate from the Watthana Witthaya Academy who became a famous writer in the post-absolutist period.	
Sadap, Concubine (*chaochom*) (born 1890, died 1983)	The last concubine to marry King Chulalongkorn, serving as a vocalist for the royal music band.	
Saisawaliphirom, Royal Consort (*phra akkharachaya*) (born 1863, died 1929)	A consort of Chulalongkorn who served as the head of the royal kitchen	
Saowapha, Queen Consort (*phra mahesi*) (born 1864, died 1919)	A daughter of King Mongkut and a half sister of King Chulalongkorn who later became his Chief Queen Consort. She was also the Queen Mother of both King Vajiravudh (Rama VI) and King Prajadhipok (Rama VII). She took the title of Queen Regent in 1897 and assumed the title of Queen Mother Sri Bajrindra in 1910.	
Saowaphaknarirat, Royal Consort (*phra akkharachaya*) (born 1854,	A grand daughter of King Rama III who became Chulalongkorn's consort.	

died 1887)		
Sawangwatthana, Queen Consort (*phra mahesi*) (born 1862, died 1955)	A younger sister of Princess Consort Sunantha (wife of King Chulalongkorn) and the grand mother of King Ananda (Rama VIII) and King Bhumibol (Rama IX).	also known as Sisawarinthira
Sin Suphansombat	A student of Sunanthalai School from 1894 to 1900	
Sisunthon, Lady (*thao*)	Thepkrasatri's sister, who defended Phuket from the Burmese invasion in 1785.	Also known as Muk
Sonklin, Concubine (*chaochom*) (born 1835, died 1925)	An ethnic Mon concubine of King Mongkut (Rama IV) who was charged with treason in the 1860s.	
Sukhumanmarasi, Queen Consort (*phra mahesi*) (born 1861, died 1927)	A half-sister and consort of King Chulalongkorn. She was well trained in literature and worked as Chulalongkorn's secretary.	
Sunantha, Princess Consort (*phra boromratchathewi*) (Born 1860, died 1880)	The eldest of the three daughters of King Mongkut and Consort Piam (Sawangwatthana, and Saowapha) all of whom became consorts of King Chulalongkorn. Princess Consort Sunantha died in a tragic boat accident with her daughter.	
Suranari, Lady (*thao*) (born 1771, died 1852)	A wife of the governor of Nakhon Ratchasima who is credited with defending the city from a Lao invasion in 1826.	Also known as *Ya* Mo (Grandma Mo)
Suriyothai, Queen (*phra mahesi*) (died 1548)	Queen of Ayutthaya who lost her life in a battle against Burma while protecting her husband King Maha Chakkraphat from the	

	enemy's attack.	
Sut Bannasan	Female candidate for district *(tambon)* election in 1933	
Sut, Lady (*mom*)	An aristocratic woman whose name is mentioned in the poem *Phleng Yao Mom Pet Sawan* of *Khun* Suwan about her homosexual preference. The poem was written during the reign of King Nangklao (Rama III).	
Sutthathip, Princess (*chaofa*) (born 1877, died 1922)	One of Chulalongkorn's favourite daughters, who worked closely with the king and accompanied him to Java in 1901.	
Suwan	Enrolled at the Kunlasattri Wang Lang school in 1881 and later became one of the very few Thai teachers at Watthana Witthaya Academy. Suwan mastered in English literature and she was employed to teach English to the princes and princesses in the palace of King Chulalongkorn.	
Suwan Patthamarat	Female candidate for district *(tambon)* election in 1933	
Tat Prathipasen	The middle class female student in the first class of Watthana Academy	
Talap Yommarat	Wife of *Phraya* Yommarat. Her husband held important roles in the administrations of King Chulalongkorn and King Vajiravudh including Minister of Interior and one of King Vajiravudh's privy councilors.	
Thawinwong Somchai	Female candidate for district *(tambon)* election in 1933	

Thepkrasatri, Lady (*thao*) (born circa. 1735, died circa. 1793)	Wife of the Governor of Phuket, who defended the island from Burmese invasion in 1785 together with her sister Sisunthon.	Also Known as Chan
Thianwan	One of the most critical writers of the nineteenth century. He wrote four series of guidebooks for women, *Bamrung nari,* in 1906.	
Tilleke, William (born 1860, died 1917)	An Attorney General of Siam and enterpreneur. He was the influential father of Lekha Aphaiwong.	
Tomlin, Jacobs	An English Protestant missionary who arrived in Siam in the reign of King Nangklao	
Vajiravudh, King (born 1881, died 1925)	The sixth monarch of the Chakri dynasty (r. 1910-1925). Educated in England and influenced by attitudes and values of the Victorian era, he carried out numerous social reforms along Western lines, i.e. the introduction of monogamy.	
Vibhavadi Rangsit, Princess (*momchao*) (born 1920, died in 1977)	Daughter of Prince Rajani Chamcharas who served as Queen Sirikit's secretary and also a well-known novelist in the post-absolutist period.	
Walai-alongkon, Princess (*phra ratchathida*) (born 1884, died 1938)	A daughter of King Chulalongkorn and Queen Sawangwatthana who played a significant role in supporting female education.	
Wat, Concubine (*chaochom*) (born 1841, died 1939)	A concubine of King Mongkut (Rama IV) who later earned the senior title of the Head of Personnel (*Thao Worachan)* of the inner court in the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V).	

Wichit Wathakan, Major-General (*luang*) (born 1898, died 1962)	He became a major figure in propaganda making in the regime of Field Marshall Phibun and took important positions such as Director General of Department of Fine Arts in 1934, and also played a major role in drafting the Cultural Mandates or Ratthaniyom prior to the outbreak of the Second World War.	
Witthaya-Prichamat, Princess (*momchao*)	One of the literate palace women in the reign of King Chulalongkorn who taught Thai literature to aristocratic girls in the palace before the founding of Sunanthalai Girl's School.	
Yam, Concubine (*chaochom*)	A consort of Chulalongkorn who had previously been a dancer of the inner court plays (*lakhon nai),* which were performed only by women of the inner city as part of the traditional rituals.	
Yasui Tetsu (born 1870, died 1945)	An early female Japanese educator, who served as the principle of Rajini School from 1904-1907.	
Yingyaowalak, Lady (*mom*) (born 1852, died 1886)	A daughter of King Mongkut and Concubine Phae. She was imprisoned for life for her adulterous affair with a Buddhist monk. Her title was demoted from princess (*phra ratchathida*) to lady (*mom*) as a result of her scandalous affair.	

Appendix II: List of Organisations

Name	Comment
A.B.C.F.M. (American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions)	The group of American missionaries who initiated education for local Siamese boys and girls in the mid 1800s.
Bangkhunphrom Palace	A renaissance-baroque style residence of the Prince Boriphat (son of King Chulalongkorn who held important positions in the military and also served as one of King Vajiravudh's privy councillors) and his family. Queen Sukuman-marasi, mother of the prince, also resided here after the inner court was abolished in the reign of King Vajiravudh (Rama VI). The residence was seized by the government after the revolution in 1932.
Khana Ratsadon	The People's Party, comprised of Western-educated young Siamese, that overthrew the absolutist regime in 1932.
Khana-kammakan Chat Rabiap Chue	The Committee to Establish Correct Names that was founded during the years of the Cultural Mandates. As part of the language reform, one of the themes of the Cultural Mandates, the mentioned committee had the responsibility to correct and establish names that fitted the gender roles of the nationalist era.
Khlon	Palace female guards in the era of the absolute monarchy
Krom Khlon	The police department of the inner city, which was comprised solely of female guards who were also known as *khlon*
Krom Khotsana	A former Office of Propaganda, which was promoted as Department of Propaganda during Phibun regime in 1940. It had a crucial role in the promotion of Phibun's nationalist policies.
Krom Mahatlek	Department of Royal Pages, founded during the reign of King Chulalongkorn with the purpose to guard the members of the

	royal family.
Krom Sinlapakon	The Department of Fine Arts
Kunlasatri Wang Lang School	The school founded by American missionaries in 1874. Located on the Thonburi side of the Chao Phraya River opposite the Grand Palace, it was the first school in Siam to provide free education to commoner children with an aim to diffuse Christianity. It was renamed in 1909 as Watthana Witthaya Academy.
M.E.P. (Mission Etrangère de Paris)	The first group of Catholic missionaries who founded the General College in 1663.
Munlanithi Chuay Lae Hai Kan-sueksa Khon Ta-bot	Educational Support Foundation for the Blind
Niphakhan School	A girl's school for aristocratic women. It was briefly opened in the late 1920s and later was shut down during the revolution in 1932. Today it is the campus of Suan Sunantha Rajabhat University.
Rajini Girls' School	When Sunanthalai Girl's School faced decline due to financial difficulties, Queen Saowapha proposed the relocation of the school and a name change to Rajini (Queen's) School in 1904.
Rong-rian Mahatlek Luang	An all-boys boarding school that was first established in 1910 with the support of King Vajiravudh (Rama VI). It is nowadays the Vajiravudh College.
Samakhom Ying Siam	Siam Women's Society that was briefly established in 1931
Sapha Sangkhom Songkhro	Council of Social Work
Sapha Satri Haeng Chat	National Women's Council
Sapha Watthanatham Haeng Chat Fai Ying	National Women's Culture Council, founded in 1942
Suea-pa	The wild tiger scout corps that was founded in 1911 by King

	Vajiravudh (Rama VI)
Suan Sunantha, Palace	Built in 1908 to serve as a new female quarters, approximately four kilometres north of the Grand Palace. Records show that by 1920 Suan Sunantha Palace housed a total of 930 residents, which comprised of approximately 896 women (including the female guards) and 34 boys.
Suan Kulap School	Developed from the previous cadet school, Suan Kulap is the oldest all-boys school in Thailand, which was founded in 1882.
Sunanthalai Girl's School	Queen Saowapha-sponsored school founded in 1892
Watthana Academy	A private girls' school, previously known as Kunlasatri Wang Lang, was re-established in Bangkapi district of Bangkok in 1909 by American woman missionaries.
World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB)	A Buddhist organisation founded in 1950

Introduction

This dissertation studies the pivotal roles of elite women of both aristocratic and commoner backgrounds in the period of Siam's political and social transitions, from the late absolute monarchy to the first decade of constitutional monarchy. The goal of this dissertation is to reveal voices and roles of women who were active in the public sphere between 1868 and 1942, with critiques of representations of women in dominant historiographical discourses. Elite women of Siam's transitional period were not a single group. They formed two different groups, who had roles and different voices in various public domains, such as the state public administration, education, print media, and politics. Therefore, in order to achieve the goal of this thesis, I will primarily focus on the competition that emerged between aristocratic women and commoner elite women, while focusing on the transition of aristocratic women's struggles and the emerging roles of commoner women from the last decades of absolutist rule to the early years of constitutional monarchy. This dissertation will ultimately demonstrate new perspectives on social, political, and gender issues, through the lens of Siamese women.

Contribution to Thai Historiography

This study is structured around the argument that Siamese women of both aristocratic and non-aristocratic backgrounds had more active roles in the public sphere in this transitional period of modern Thai history than has previously been represented in mainstream Thai historiography. While previous studies and official historiography

tend to view the history of Siam from the perspective of men, this dissertation will demonstrate the different perspectives of Siamese women in order to fill this gap in Thai historiography. By incorporating the overlooked voices of women into this research, the female position in the period of Siam's social and political transformation from 1868 to 1942 can be demonstrated more thoroughly. From sources including personal memoirs, cremation volumes, and women's magazines, two major gaps in women's history will be fulfilled.

The first research gap addressed by this dissertation concerns the overlooked roles of women from the height of the absolutist period to the first decade of the post-absolutist era. The public roles of aristocratic noble women that emerged in the offices of the court of King Chulalongkorn (r. 1868-1910) are the beginning point of this exploration. While the majority of Thai-language studies focus on the roles of male aristocrats in the process of modernising Siam, this study underlines the importance of women's roles that contributed to the construction of Siam's modern image and institutions. The aristocratic women and their pivotal roles in the Bangkok court, including the administration, serve as early case studies of this research.

As Siamese absolutism was weakened by the rising critical voices of educated civilians from 1910 in the reign of King Vajiravudh (r. 1910-1925), the power and roles of aristocratic women also shifted (Copeland, 1993). While civilian voices emerged, the throne of this Western-educated king became even more unstable when he refused to continue the practice of polygamy, causing disruptions in his relationships with a number of aristocrats. The tradition of 'daughter gifting' of Siamese aristocrats, which allowed them to establish a closer relationship to the king, was terminated in the reign of King Vajiravudh. As a result of the king's disapproval of polygamous practice, a number of palace women had to move out of the female quarters (*fai nai*), and by the

second decade of the twentieth century these noble ladies struggled to find a place for themselves in the public sphere.

This leads to the second gap in Thai historiography addressed here, which deals with the transition of power, and the roles of different classes of women during the pre-revolutionary years and its immediate aftermath. The aristocratic women's struggles and the emerging roles of commoner women that had started in the 1920s are the major issues that motivate the discussion on the competition between aristocratic and commoner women from the period prior to the revolution in 1932 to the first decade of the post-absolutist regime. This transition of power between the two groups of women is a key focus of this thesis that will contribute to filling a gap in the historical literature by redressing the primary concentration of past historical research on the power of male aristocratic elites of the absolutist era and the roles of rising commoner men in the revolution of 1932.

Finally, by focusing on the voices of women, rather than the voices of men or the official historiography, the above-mentioned gaps in history will be filled. The representations of women in the domains that had been under-represented by mainstream Thai historiography, such as the print industry and their roles in politics, will be demonstrated. To accomplish this goal, each of the chapters in this work is structured to describe and discuss the issues in chronological order. Chapter I sets the scene of this study by exploring previous accounts on women's history in Thailand in both mainstream and non-mainstream publications in order to point out the under-representation of women's public roles. This gap in the previous studies will be filled in the rest of the chapters of this thesis. Chapter II then starts the exploration of women's emerging public roles by looking directly at the court of King Chulalongkorn as the beginning era when aristocratic women entered into the public domains. They enhanced their social status as a result of the development of female education, which is the main

issue of subsequent discussion in chapter III. Chapters IV and V then approach the transition of power from the aristocratic group of women to the rising literate commoner women in their concept of femininity in a detailed case study of the women's print industry. While the commoner women rose to the public scene, the political struggles of aristocratic women during the years of revolution in the 1930s are discussed in detail in chapter VI, which demonstrates that the roles of female aristocrats began to disappear from the public sphere and that they were replaced by the commoner wives of politicians in the post-absolutist era. Lastly, chapter VII concludes this dissertation with biographical studies on prominent wives of politicians from the early post-revolutionary period, such as La-iad Phibunsongkhram and Phoonsuk Banomyong. These case studies serve as evidence of women's roles in the political sphere. All of these chapters are designed to contribute to the main argument that focuses on the pivotal roles of women of different elite backgrounds and the competition between them in the period between 1868 and 1942.

Research Objectives and Arguments

Following the main argument that Siamese elite women of both aristocratic and non-aristocratic backgrounds had more active roles in the public sphere in this period of modern Thai history than has previously been represented in the official history, this thesis will focus on the following objectives. First, it aims to redefine the ideas of what constituted being an elite woman of the era of Siam's political transformation by demonstrating that the so called 'elite women' were in fact divided into two groups, namely, the aristocratic elites and commoner elites. And second, it attempts to

demonstrate that both groups of women had more roles and voices in the public sphere than has previously been represented by mainstream Thai historiography.

Objective I: Defining Elite Women: Aristocratic Elite Women versus Commoner Elite Women

The rise of commoner women in the domains of education and the commercial print industry by the 1920s caused class tensions between different groups of literate Siamese women. Scot Barmé's (2002) opening chapter in *Woman, Man, Bangkok: Love, Sex, and Popular Culture in Thailand* focuses on women and the social transitions of the late nineteenth century and emphasises the earlier years of female education. He states that fee-paying day schools had already emerged by 1902 and became popular among daughters of the 'well-to-do' Bangkokians (Barmé, 2002, p 22). This posed a challenge to the aristocratic group of women, who had exclusively dominated female education and women's print media industry from the first decade of the twentieth century.

Who were the aristocratic women? These were the women who were born with noble family backgrounds and who began to take roles in the public sphere under the absolutist reign of King Chulalongkorn. As a result of the expansion of the size of the inner court during this reign, these noble ladies stepped up to establish their power and roles first within the inner court, and then they eventually came to play roles in the King's office and other administrative offices. With this enhancement of women's position in the Siamese aristocratic society by the beginning of the twentieth century, female education became essential. These noble ladies were the ones who founded the first formal schooling for women, which developed from the tradition of domestic skills learning that the inner court ladies passed on from the elder ones to the younger

generations of girls. As girls' schools started to be established, the women's print media also emerged. While women's magazines were in fact initiated by Siamese noble men, literate aristocratic women finally got involved in the production of the women's magazines in the 1910s with the style and content that reflected their noble backgrounds.

Who were the commoner elite women? This group of women rose from middle class family backgrounds, which included the wealthy bourgeois and Chinese merchants of urban Bangkok. The emergence of commoner elite women had begun in the pre-revolutionary period of the 1920s, when female education became widely available among bourgeois families. These were the Siamese women of the pre-revolutionary years who challenged the roles of traditional noble elite women. The commoner elite women contributed to the growth of feminist voices in the print media and eventually entered the domain of politics as the first Siamese female politicians. While lacking aristocratic backgrounds, these women nonetheless raised their voices with confidence. Hence, they constructed new images of becoming an elite woman. The commoner elite women used their literacy and their confident voices as skills that would support them in the high society and eventually become accepted in the public sphere dominated by men.

The period between 1925 and 1932 was a significant transitional period of Siamese history. The aristocrats and the nobility were challenged by the emerging literate civilians in this period of growing nationalism (Copeland, 1993). At the same time, tensions and competition between the noble and civilian women had also begun. These two groups contested their voices in the pages of women's magazines of the mentioned era. While the noble-sponsored magazines emphasised the importance of poetry, translated English prose fiction, and the promotion of domestic skills, the emerging civilian-supported magazines raised feminist voices and criticisms on social issues such as the male practice of polygamy, and women's suffrage. The competition

of different groups of Siamese women in the print industry only marked the beginning of the far-reaching struggles that were going to become more apparent in the period of the post-absolutist regime. The political transition and the tensions between these groups of Siamese women tend to go hand-in-hand. As the absolutist rule faced its decline, the position of the aristocratic women was also challenged by the commoner elite women. The revolution of 1932 that overthrew the absolutist monarchy marked the rise of civilian voices. The new government, under the constitutional monarchy that was led by the People's Party (*Khana Ratsadon*), was initially supportive of the critical opinions on Siamese aristocrats. These critical opinions were reflected in the women's print media industry of the early 1930s. As the revolution approached, voices of emerging commoner elite women became even more critical. As the result, the voices of elite women were split into two groups, between the traditional voice of noble women and the non-aristocratic voices of commoner women. This was a turning point in Thai history of women, which has largely been overlooked by Thai historiography.

Objective II: Critiques of Women's Representations, Elite Women and their Public Roles from the Absolutist to Post-absolutist Era

Another objective of this dissertation is to demonstrate that both groups of women, the aristocratic and commoner women, had significant roles and voices in the public sphere of the late absolutist and early post-absolutist periods. While mainstream Thai historiography has under-represented the roles and voices of women outside the nationalist discourse, which I will elaborate in the next section, evidence of women's roles in the public sphere can be traced back to as early as the reign of King Chulalongkorn. Historians might question the use of the term 'public sphere' here. Being aware of the criticism on the extensive use of the separate spheres of 'public' and

'private' as the explanation of gender roles of the Victorian era in English women's historiography, the 'public sphere' in this work has its distinctive definition (Vickery, 2009). The roles of Siamese women in the public sphere concentrated upon in this thesis include their opportunities to take administrative positions, to support and draft curricula for female education, and to have their voices heard in the print media industry. Only after the revolution of 1932 will the public life of the women studied in this work be considered as involving their demands for political rights and other subsequent roles. Therefore, the definition of public sphere in this thesis, will not include the rights to citizenship nor entrepreneurship that men sustain in their public life.

Although the Victorian-era European form of the differentiation of separate spheres for men and women is not directly relevant to this thesis' argument, it is nonetheless prominent in works in mainstream Thai historiography. The place for women in most of these works still belongs to the private sphere of home and domesticity, with only a few exceptions of aristocratic women. As a result, this thesis concentrates on demonstrating the under-represented voices and roles of women in Thai official and mainstream historiography. In order to achieve this objective, it will first focus on the recovery of voices and roles of palace women within the *fai nai* (inner court) under the absolutist regime, with the concentration on the Fifth reign of King Chulalongkorn as the beginning point to study the rising public roles of women. These palace women, who included Chulalongkorn's consorts, daughters, and other women of aristocratic backgrounds, held important administrative positions in the palace. Their roles in supporting female education is also emphasised as one of the major contributions of aristocratic women to the modernisation of Siamese society. This corresponded with the Siamese aristocratic men's mission to create the *siwilai* image, the term that was introduced by the Siamese court from English term 'civilised', in the second half of the nineteenth century, which demonstrates Siamese adaptation and

imitation to Western values and lifestyles (Thongchai 1994: Peleggi 2002). Chulalongkorn's brother, Prince Damrong, claimed that women had limited roles in the adoption of these Western values and it was men who served as agents of *siwilai* (Saichol, 2003). This dissertation, however, contests Damrong's point. It will demonstrate and redress the overlooked roles and positions of Siamese women in this modernising period. By the end of the absolutist era, aristocratic women had contributed to the enhancement of the status of Siamese women in general by supporting education for girls, promoting women's magazines, and motivating the early feminist movements.

While the inner court faced its decline in the 1920s, transformations of gender roles outside the palace took place. The initiative of foreign missionaries in supporting an open education for all girls as early as the 1870s resulted in rising rates of literacy among the middle-class females.[1] These non-aristocratic women became the new leading voices of Siamese women in the pre-revolutionary decade of the 1920s. The emergence of class conflict between the aristocratic elite women and the rising middle-class women became a central issue in the competition in female education, the development of the women's print media, and even the political roles of women in the post-absolutist regime. By the eve of the Second World War, the nationalist policies of the Phibun regime played a significant role in encouraging non-aristocratic women to participate in national campaigns. As a result, these leading voices of women in the post-absolutist era rose from the literate women with non-aristocratic backgrounds. All of these forms of evidence suggest that Siamese women were active in the public sphere by the end of the nineteenth century and their roles had also increased throughout the years of the political transition.

[1] Presbyterian missionary women founded the *Kunlasatri Wang Lang* School in 1874 (see chapter III *Early Female Education in Siam: 1870-1910*).

The analysis of the historical evidence collected during the fieldwork of this study demonstrates that Siamese women began to emerge in the public sphere by having significant roles in the following four fields of: state public administration, education, print media, and politics. Biographies of aristocratic women in the cremation volumes compiled by Prince Damrong Rajanubhap reveal that royal elite women took major roles in the administration of the state during the period of bureaucratic and organisational reform of Chulalongkorn's reign. Official documents and personal memoirs also contribute to the exploration of the early female education of Siamese women. In the print industry, volumes of early women's magazines gave a significant voice to women of both the aristocratic and commoner backgrounds. And finally, women's roles became prominent in politics, as we see through the examination of biographies of politician's wives in the post-absolutist period. While official mainstream Thai historiography tends to under-represent women's roles in the public sphere, the aforementioned historical evidence and current Thai academic works and journals demonstrate significant public roles of women in the period covered by this thesis.

Limitations and Scope

The primary focus of this dissertation is elite women's roles during the transition from absolutist to constitutional monarchy. Because only women from privileged backgrounds, both aristocrats and commoners, had the capacity to participate in this key political transition, working class women are beyond the scope of this study. Even though working class women had important roles in the economy in that time, they were excluded from the political domain, which is the prime focus of this study. Although during the absolute monarchy aristocratic women's mobility was restricted to within the

inner court (*fai nai*), working class women dominated the trading in the market place. Unlike royal elite women, while working class women had limited access to education they did have freedom of movement. Although they appeared to have significant roles in the market place as well as working in the agricultural fields as labourers, their role in the political domain in the period of transition from an absolutist to a constitutional monarchy was negligible. Beside the exclusion of working class women from politics, further study on their roles in the economy is restricted due to the limited availability of source materials. Because of the absence of written records by working class women and official records that focus on the central elite history, it is difficult to include their roles in the market place into this research.

The significant period between 1868 and 1942 is the time frame of this dissertation that will demonstrate the emerging voices and public roles of Siamese women. The reign of King Chulalongkorn (r. 1868-1910) is chosen as the beginning point of this dissertation. Western criticisms of the inferior status of Siamese women became the monarch's concern by the late nineteenth century. One of the most popularly received criticisms of Western visitors was the account by Anna Leonowens (born 1831, died 1915), the governess at the Siamese court from 1862 to 1868. She was the author of *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* (1870) and *Romance of the Harem* (1873), which criticised female slavery and the practice of polygamy of Siamese men. She also described brutal punishments that were carried out on women at the court of Siam (Leonowens, 1870, p 115). Another missionary, Rev. Noah A. McDonald, who spent 26 years in Siam between 1860 and 1886, also recounted the inferior status of Siamese women in his account. His memoir criticises the polygamous practice of the Siamese nobility that it was "one of the curses of the land" (McDonald, 1999, p 123). Apart from the Christian missionaries, Ekaterina Ivanova Denitsky (born 1888, died 1960), Russian wife of the Siamese Prince Chakrabongse (born 1883, died 1920), also

described the inferior status of Siamese women.

> They are not educated at all and from early childhood are taught to regard a man as a superior being. Polygamy, which I find disgusting, is widespread. Sometimes one man will have ten wives or more. There is a favourite wife and all the others are practically servants, who have to crawl before their master and are afraid to utter a word. This arouses my indignation (Hunter & Narisa, 1994, p 70).

With all these Western criticisms in mind, Chulalongkorn employed high-ranking palace women to be in charge of the administration of the palace in order to demonstrate to the West that Siamese women were in fact equal subjects to men. A highlight of the Fifth reign was when Queen Saowapha was appointed as the Queen Regent in 1897, ahead of all the eligible male aristocrats. However, following Chulalongkorn's reign, the role of palace women declined, but the voice of commoner women rose in the print media industry in the years leading to the revolution of 1932. The growth in the number of literate commoner women and the public representation of their voices in female magazines were significant factors in the emergence of the political roles they took by the end of the 1930s. Therefore, the period between the 1870s and 1930s was the significant transitional era for Siamese women and their public roles that enhanced their social positions. This transitional period marks the time frame of this dissertation.

Regarding the scope of this work, it aims to explore the roles and voices of women in both the absolutist and post-absolutist periods, although with certain limitations on the source materials. In demonstrating the active roles of women, I have collected personal memoirs, journals, and cremation volumes. While the commoner women only began to have access to education from the turn of the twentieth century, the source materials from the earlier years were dependent on the aristocratic elites' writings. Only from the 1920s did the voices of commoner women begin to emerge in print and their roles had become active by the end of the 1930s.

In addition, this dissertation focuses on the urban space of Bangkok. While being aware of the expansion of other regional centres, Bangkok is chosen because of its role as the centre for political power and economic and cultural activity from the period of the absolutist monarchy to constitutional monarchy. As a result, this thesis concentrates on the literate female inhabitants of Bangkok as its main population.

Notes on Source Materials

This dissertation is based on historical materials, which are located in Thailand and Australia. The preliminary research I conducted at the National Library of Australia in Canberra and the ANU libraries allowed me to discover the cremation volumes of notable women in Thai history as well as a number of recent journals and magazines such as *Sinlapa Watthanatham*. Nevertheless, the main site for the source materials of this research is located in Bangkok, Thailand, where I spent eight months collecting data.

Through eight months of conducting the fieldwork in Thailand, I have recovered valuable source materials, including volumes of cremation books, early women's magazines from 1905 to 1948, and personal memoirs, which give a new significant dimension to the study of Siamese women's history. The National Library of Thailand provides access to a collection of cremation volumes of notable elite women. The biographies of women from the absolutist period serve as the core materials to understand elite women's status and their emerging roles in the public sphere as early as the reign of King Chulalongkorn. Women's magazines of the early twentieth century were also collected during my fieldwork. Volumes of the following nine women's magazines, published between 1925 and 1933, were collected: *Bamrung-nari (1906),*

Kunlasatri (1906), Satri thai (1925), *Nari-nithet* (1926), *Nari-khasem* (1926), *Suphap-nari* (1930), *Nari-nat* (1930), and *Net-nari* (1932). In addition, I also had access to the collection of the first girl's school magazine, *Watthana Witthaya*, at Watthana Academy's library. All of these were essential materials, which demonstrate the emergence of women's voices in Siam during the pre-revolutionary years. They contribute to this thesis' main argument, which focuses on the active roles of elite women in the public sphere that has previously been under-represented in the mainstream Thai historiography. Alongside the recovery of women's roles and voices in the public sphere, this work redefines the term 'elite woman' (*ying phudi*) in Siam's modern period, which includes skilled women of non-aristocratic backgrounds who are not mentioned in the mainstream historiography. These emphases are what I concentrate on throughout the writing of this thesis. The findings of this dissertation reflect the above-mentioned argument, which corresponds to this dissertation's aim to study the pivotal roles of women in the significant period of Siam's political and social transition between 1868 and 1942.

A Note on Transliteration

The transliteration system used in this dissertation follows the system of the Thai Royal Institute system of Romanisation except for the names of people who already have their own preferred spellings in English, such as "King Chulalongkorn", "Pridi Banomyong" and "Damrong Rajanubhab". I leave these names the way the authors have originally written them.

Chapter I, *Setting the Scene: Representations of Women in Thai Historiography*, aims to provide readers with critiques of existing publications of both official and non-mainstream works that represent women from the final decades of the absolutist regime to the early post-revolutionary period, while pointing out the missing gaps in the previous accounts that will be filled by this research. This chapter studies five different genres of Thai studies on women, which include (i) Prince Damrong Rajanubhap's works in cremation volumes of aristocratic women, (ii) official nationalist publications of *Luang* Wichit Watthakan, (iii) contemporary romantic fiction, (iv) recent official publications and commemorative publications of women warriors, and (v) non-mainstream studies on women, including selected popular history books. The survey of the above categories of Thai historiography provides a touchstone for developing arguments in the rest of the chapters of this dissertation.

Chapter II, *Fai Nai (Inner City): King Chulalongkorn 1868-1910*, studies the aristocratic women of the inner city/inner court as the beginning point of the analysis of the roles of Siamese women within and outside the domestic sphere. This chapter looks at roles of palace women (including the queen consorts, concubines, ladies-in-waiting, and general female labourers) that emerged in the reign of King Chulalongkorn. It focuses on active roles of women, who had moved beyond the confined boundary of the inner city of the Bangkok court to the previously male-dominated sphere, such as the King's office and other administrative offices of the palace. Western criticism of the inferior status of women is the factor that stimulated the king to allow these women to appear in the previously male-dominated sphere, although with certain restrictions. This chapter discusses the enhanced positions of aristocratic women as the male response to criticisms from Western visitors. The acting authority that Queen Saowapha had while

serving as the king's regent highlights the beginning of the transition of aristocratic women from the private space into the royal public sphere. The roles of Princess Naphaphonprapha, who was the General Secretary (*Somdet Athibodi*) of the inner court, Princess Walai-alongkon, who became the main sponsor of Rajini girl's school, and Consort Wat, who served as the Head of Personnel (*thao worachan*) of the inner court, are emphasised in this chapter. Apart from these individuals, the administrative function and class structure of palace women under the Fifth reign is also examined in detail. The findings demonstrate that palace women enjoyed a certain level of autonomy and had strengthened their training and skills, which contributed to the enhancement of women's status in the subsequent decades. Even the lowest class of women in the inner court, *khlon* (female labourers), were able to climb up the social scale and became clerks in offices. This chapter highlights evidence of women's active roles in the absolutist years that is not represented in Thai official historiography and also marks the beginning of the rise of aristocratic women in the public sphere.

Chapter III, *Early Female Education in Siam 1870-1910*, looks in detail at the modernisation process of Siamese female education, particularly in the urban areas of Bangkok and surroundings. By the end of the nineteenth century, King Chulalongkorn was taking a reactive position rather than a pro-active position in regard to the development of female education. Unlike male education, which King Chulalongkorn had a strong will to promote as a way to bring the nation to an equal level with the West, female education was not encouraged by the aristocratic men of the Siamese court. It was once again due to the active role of Queen Saowapha that the royal sponsored Sunanthalai School was established within the inner court in 1892. The main discussions in this chapter concentrate on both publicly funded forms of female schools and the Protestant missionary schools. For the daughters of the aristocrats, their training in literacy and domestic skills were offered in the inner city where older princesses were

teachers of the younger ones, and occasionally foreign missionaries were also hired on contracts to teach foreign languages. However, outside the palace, education for women was initiated by Western missionary women as early as 1837 and provided an open education for girls from all social and class backgrounds. Even daughters of merchants and other commoners were able to enroll in missionary schools. By 1874, the rivalry between aristocratic Siamese and Western missionaries had emerged when Kunlasatri Wang Lang school was founded by American missionaries. This school had the aim to promote Christianity through fair education for all children. While the Kunlasatri Wang Lang school's concentration on English learning offered an incentive for well-off parents, Queen Saowapha's sponsored Sunanthalai school promoted Buddhist values, domestic skills and court etiquette and manners of the inner city. This rivalry in women's education demonstrates class competition between the new literate women of bourgeois background and the trained aristocratic women of court traditions. This competition is reflected more clearly in the voices of women in their representations of modernity, which is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter IV, *Defining 'Femininity': The Emerging Competition between Aristocratic and Commoner Women*, explores the transformation of women's representations in parallel to their interpretations of the concept of femininity from the absolutist period up to the pre-revolutionary years. This chapter takes the issue of female subordination in Siam as the beginning point to discuss the gradual development of aristocratic women's representations as 'civilised' women. The aristocratic men encouraged women of the absolutist period to adopt Victorian era fashion and lifestyles in order to emulate 'civilised' Westerners. Nonetheless, the popularity of the fashion and style of the Victorian era faced decline as the absolutist regime faced its challenges. The 'civilised' representation of femininity was replaced by the image of the Siamese 'Modern Girl' (*sao samai*). The *sao samai* represented the anti-aristocratic sentiment of

the rising middle class, especially the voices of commoner women, in the pre-revolutionary decade before 1932. This chapter highlights the Modern Girl as a free agent of new commoner elite women who wanted to represent themselves without the influence of men. *Sao samai* demanded gender equality (often related to the criticism of male polygamous practice) and women's participation in politics, hence their public roles. By the 1930s, representations of *sao samai* became widely popular alongside the enhanced status of women of the middle class in Siamese society as the revolution of 1932 was set in motion. This chapter highlights the breakaway of Siamese women, especially the commoner women, from the male shadow, while at the same time explaining the transition of power from one group of elite women to the other. The rise of these new voices of commoner women and the competition between them and the noble aristocratic women are illustrated in the women's print media, which will be the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter V, *The Rise of Women's Print Media: Competing Women's Voices in the Pre-revolutionary Years 1906-1932*, looks at the impact of the rising female literacy rate in the print media industry. This chapter is structured around study of the available collections of women's magazines between 1906 and 1932 that represent the voices of women from both aristocratic and non-aristocratic backgrounds. Popular themes including domestic skills, women in defence of the nation, and early feminist movements are addressed in this chapter. The highlight of this chapter is the focus on the rise of non-aristocratic women's magazines, which greatly expanded in number in the late 1920s. Three of the most radical women's magazines in this period were: *Satri thai* (1925), *Net-nari* (1932) and *Ying thai* (1932). These magazines represented themselves as the voices of middle-class women rather than voices of women of the aristocratic level, which focused more on fiction and upscale literary styles. In contrast, these three non-aristocratic female magazines offered political critiques and openly

brought up social concerns for women in the way that none of the earlier female magazines had done. They raised women's complaints about the widespread practice of polygamy, educated women on marriage law, and also promoted gender equality and women's political rights. This chapter demonstrates that literate non-aristocratic women had slowly followed the role of female aristocrats in the print media as early as the 1930s and confirms the declining status of the Siamese aristocrats in the same period. The competition between the two groups of women is highlighted in this chapter and its result reflects the decline of power of the aristocratic women.

Chapter VI, *The Decline of Fai Nai: The Struggles of Aristocratic Women in the Post-absolutist Public Sphere 1910-1942*, is concerned with the status of aristocratic women as a response to the rising roles of commoner women in the public sphere. The revolution in 1932 highlighted the beginning of aristocratic women's struggles. The impact of the 1932 revolution on aristocratic women was the official end of *fai nai* (inner city). The inner city was most prominent during the reign of King Chulalongkorn. The private female quarters served as a space where aristocratic women exercised their autonomous power. Nevertheless, the inner court had entered into decline from the reign of King Vajiravudh, who introduced the removal of the female quarters to Suan Sunantha Palace, away from the Grand Palace, which subsequently became an exclusive space for the king and his male courtiers. After 1932, the roles of these noble ladies diminished, when the People's Party's government closed their quarters at Suan Sunantha. As a result, these former palace women were put under pressure to find new homes. Some of them fled Siam together with their male relatives. The lives of Phunphitsamai Diskul and Naphaphonprapha, both high-ranking princesses who fled into exile during the revolution, are explored in this chapter. As the political changes took place in the capital, these aristocratic women disappeared from the public scene. While aristocratic women felt oppressed by the new post-absolutist government in the

political public sphere, some of them chose to express their voices in the sphere of literature. Two of the most prominent female writers that emerged in the post-absolutist period were Princess Vibhavadi Rangsit and Buppha Nimmanhemin. In the sphere of romantic literature, these writers popularised the representations of modern women, concepts of love and marriage, as well as nationalism and criticisms toward the military regimes. Although the public roles of aristocratic women declined, women of the commoner background rose in the public sphere by the end of the 1930s in the regime of Field Marshal Phibun. This chapter points out the complete shift in power from Siamese aristocratic women to the hands of the commoner women. As the result of this, the roles of aristocratic women were claimed by the wives of rising politicians, whose roles will be the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter VII, *Re-entering the Public Sphere: Wartime and Post-war Roles of Thai Elite Women*, deals with the post-absolutist era roles of women in politics. This chapter emphasises women's agency within the state, which includes case studies of the wives of major politicians and their contributions to the enhanced positions of women in the political sphere. La-iad Phibunsongkhram, Lekha Aphaiwong, and Phoonsuk Banomyong became political agents in the public sphere following their husbands' roles in modern Thai politics. While both La-iad and Lekha became prominent figures in the promotion of the Cultural Mandates (*Ratthaniyom*) during Phibun's regime, Phoonsuk was the first female political activist in Thai history. The study of their public and personal lives is the core element of this chapter. The three wives of politicians: demonstrated their active involvement in the public domain. This chapter concludes that in the period of growing nationalism, Thai women were no longer excluded from the public sphere, in which even commoner women also participated.

Chapter I

Setting the Scene: Representations of Women in Thai Historiography

Introduction

The history of Thai women is becoming a prominent topic in both Thai academic studies and official publications. While representations of women as subordinate domestic possessions of men still dominates Thai official historiography, the local academic community is actively redressing issues on women's history that were previously under-represented. This chapter aims to explore both official publications and non-mainstream works that represent women from the final decades of the absolutist regime to the present. By looking at five distinctive source materials, which include: (i) Prince Damrong Rajanubhap's works in cremation volumes of aristocratic women, (ii) official nationalist publications of *Luang* Wichit Watthakan, (iii) contemporary romantic fiction, (iv) recent official publications and commemorations of women warriors, and (v) non-mainstream studies on women including selected popular history books, this chapter will demonstrate the development of women's representations in Thai historiography while pointing out the missing gaps in studies of women's history.

Thailand's Fine Art Department (*Krom Sinlapakon*) of the Ministry of Education (*Krasuang Sueksathikan*) is the main producer of Thai official publications in the field of history and culture. These official publications focus on the success of Thai aristocrats in "building and protecting the country despite great difficulties, and promising a prosperous future" (Thongchai, 1994, p 99 in Lysa, 1998, p 336), which Thongchai Winichakul has more recently categorised as "royal-national history" (*rachachat-niyom*) (Thongchai, 2001). Thongchai stated in this article that the *Paknam* incident of 1893[2] marked the origin of royal-national historiography in which its narrative emphasised the king's supposedly wise decision to safeguard Siam in exchange for territories ceded to France (Thongchai, 2001). In this master narrative of official Siamese history, the king plays the role of national hero. This royal-nationalist history became the dominant theme of mainstream contemporary Thai historiography, and has also been used to explain the roles of women in official history, as I will elaborate below.

Among the various publications of the Ministry of Education, one of the most influential works is the history textbook of Thai high school students. Nonetheless, in *Thai History: Year 4-6* (*prawattisat thai: matthayom sueksa pi-thi 4-6*), significant women in history were overlooked (Krasuang Sueksathikan, 2010). This high school textbook on history propagates the idea of a great relationship between the Thai people and the monarchical institution while the roles of women were not mentioned. It might have been expected that the roles of women and female warriors would be included in the section on Thai culture and important people (*watthanathamthai lae*

[2] The naval confrontation between France and Siam, which caused by the French territorial claim to the whole of east bank of Mekong River. The incident resulted in the victory of France and their control over the Kingdom of Laos.

bukkhonsamkhan) but they were not (Krasuang Sueksathikan, 2010, p 235-260). Instead, this section provides short biographies of Abbot *Krom-phra* Paramanuchit-chinorot, Professor Prawet Wasi, *Krom-phraya* Damrong Rajanubhap, Pridi Banomyong, and *Luang* Wichit Wathakan. Even foreigners such as an American missionary, Dr. Bradley, are mentioned, but it is disappointing that no female figures are included in the biographies of important people in this section of the textbook (Krasuang Sueksathikan, 2010).

Nevertheless, a space for accounts on women's history is present in official publications by Thailand's Fine Art Department (*Krom Sinlapakon*). The Fine Art Department has produced a number of books and magazines that reflect the ideologies of royal-nationalism that dominate official publications from the 1960s (Thongchai, 2014). In this part, I will look particularly at the works that deal with women in Thai history. The department's publications, *Important Women in Thai History* (*satri-samkhan nai prawattisat thai*, Krom Sinlapakon, 2004) and *Thai Society in the Fifth Reign* (*sangkhom thai samai ratchakan thi 5*, Krom Sinlapakon, 1979) provide space for women in their pages but the major discussions and biographies were based on the women who served as national heroines. While *Thai Society in the Fifth Reign* employed photographs as a way to narrate Siamese society during the reign of King Chulalongkorn, *Important Women in Thai History* is a collection of biographies of important women dating from the Sukhothai period to the late twentieth century. In the latter work, official representations of aristocratic women are included. The Fine Art Department produced *Important Women in Thai History* in order to celebrate Queen Sirikit's 72nd birthday in 2004. As a result of this celebration, the book focuses on compiling biograpgies of women who are represented as contributing to the national reputation and survival, including, *Somdet-phra* Suriyothai, *Thao* Thepkrasatri and *Thao* Sisunthon, and *Thao* Suranari. These women were renowned female heroines in

Thai history who served in battles to save the nation from the encroachment of the neighbouring states such as Laos and Burma. Other elite women and wives of politicians, such as *Thanphuying* La-iad Phibunsongkhram and *Than-phuying* Talap Yommarat are also mentioned in this book.

Apart from the above-mentioned books, the Fine Art Department also produced *Sinlapakon* magazine, whose stated aim included in each issue is to "conserve and nurture the existing cultural heritage of Thailand". Queen Saowapha is praised in Sukolrat Tharasak's article "Her Majesty Queen Sri Bajarindra, the Queen Mother in Dr. Malcolm Smith's Perspective" that translates Dr. Malcolm Smith's book *A Physician at the Court of Siam*, published in 1947 (Sukolrat, 2013). The analysis in Sukolrat's article demonstrates that according to Dr. Smith, the queen was hard working and knowledgeable. The representation of the queen in this article is influenced by the ideology of royal-nationalism. Even by bringing in a Western visitor's perspective, the magazine selectively emphasised the supporting role of the queen to King Chulalongkorn rather than her active role in the administration while she was acting as the king's regent from April to December 1897. This demonstrates that *Sinlapakon* magazine is another example of official history that promotes male domination of the mainstream Thai historiography.

Although official publications tend to downplay women's representations under the domination of men, other types of publications are increasingly representing women outside the mainstream historiography and will be used as the core materials in this work. There are five major types of publications that represent women in Thai history. First, Prince Damrong Rajanubhap's biographies of elite women that are included in their cremation volumes marked the beginning of women's representations in Thai historiography. While Damrong wrote solely about aristocratic women of the palace, the romantic fiction that emerged in the late 1920s demonstrates the rising position of

commoner women. This second type of publications developed at the same time as the growing romantic movements in popular culture in the pre-revolutionary years of the early twentieth century. The third category is the nationalistic official works by *Luang* Wichit Watthakan (born 1898, died 1962), who was an important author of the early post-absolutist regime. He included women in his works, which aimed to promote the nationalistic sentiments of the Phibun regime. While nationalism served as the main campaign of the early post-absolutist years, royalism resumed its position in Thai publications by the 1960s together with representations of women warriors in national monuments. These royalist publications, as the fourth category, reflected the then military government's position in support of the rehabilitation of the monarchy. The final category concentrates on the more recent works as the non-mainstream historiography, including publications for the popular market by Matichon Group. This printing house has been collecting and publishing essays from Thai academics and independent writers, which contribute to the growing studies of Thai women's history. All of these five categories of historical publications are summarised and discussed in this chapter.

Prince Damrong Rajanubhap: Women's Representations in Cremation Volumes

Prince Damrong Rajanubhap (born 1862, died 1943) is known in Thai official discourse as the Father of Thai history. Besides a number of his essays on Thai history, Damrong wrote hundreds of biographies of Siamese aristocrats that were published in the form of cremation volumes. By the turn of the twentieth century, the production of these cremation volumes became a common practice among the elites and this was the first time that biographies of women were written and published (Lysa, 1998, p 336).

Damrong's works, such as the biography of *Chaochom* (consort) Thiang, "exemplify the expectations that were placed on palace women" (Lysa, 1998, p 336). The nurturing and aristocratic qualities are emphasised in these biographies of palace women. These two aspects of Damrong's biographical works are focused on in this part of the chapter. They are examples of royal-nationalist narratives in official historiography.

Apart from the direct duty to the king, expectations on palace women also included the good up bringing of the king's children. The biography of *Chaochom* Thapthim, consort of King Chulalongkorn, emphasises this quality. Prince Damrong praised the consort for her nurturing of all three children and even for nurturing himself when he was a boy (Damrong, 1938, p 43). When her son, Prince Nakhonchaisi, started work at the Ministry of Defence upon his return from training in Europe, she became even more concerned with the prince's declining health as he over-worked and refused to eat. Damrong mentioned that the consort brought this matter to the attention of the king as she was hoping the prince would listen to the king more than her (Damrong, 1938). This nurturing quality of the consort was represented by Damrong as part of the domestic responsibilities of palace women. They were seen as dutiful and qualified women with a nurturing nature.

Damrong's biographies demonstrate that palace women, while serving as good mothers, were equipped with skills superior to commoner women. These skills included not only domestic skills but also literary skill. Prince Damrong wrote in Queen Consort Sukhuman's biography that she could write poems as well as men, and this was a quality that only existed among aristocratic women of the Bangkok court (Damrong in Nakhonsawan-woraphinit, 1927). This is the reason why Damrong emphasised, to a great extent, the education of palace women in this biography. Damrong explained at length about the system of education in the palace. The aristocratic boys and girls had a co-education in the palace up to the age of 13 for boys and 11 for girls. Only after that

they were separated to receive different educations. While boys began their study of Buddhism, sciences, and martial training, aristocratic girls' education concentrated on domestic skills and literature (Damrong in Nakhonsawan-woraphinit, 1927). These were skills reserved only for palace women, which conferred on them different qualities from commoner women.

In Damrong's biographies of aristocratic women, women are represented as skillful, although still confined within the domestic space where men dominated. Nevertheless, the greater quality of palace women, other than their nurturing nature and skills, was their loyalty to the king. Damrong ensured that his works on the biographies of the king's consorts emphasised their loyalty to the great kings, especially King Mongkut and King Chulalongkorn. This sense of loyalty to the monarchy in representations of women was soon replaced by the nationalistic official history of the new civilian government, after the 1932 revolution, and would reappear again in the genre of popular history, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Luang Wichit Watthakan: Official Nationalistic Representations of Thai Women in the Early Post-absolutist Period

In order to understand the directions of the official representation of women, it is important to start by looking at the shift in civilian roles during the year of political transition of 1932. The post-revolutionary government of 1932 established a firm relationship between women and the state. The women's print industry that was flourishing in the late 1920s (see chapter V *The Rise of Women's Print Media: The Modernisation and Pre-revolutionary Years 1906-1932*) became closely monitored during the revolution and many women's publications were shut down either by the new government or because of their own financial constraints by 1933 (Barmé, 2002). As a

result, the most dominant representation of women in the immediate post-revolutionary period was mainly in official sources. This part of this chapter will focus on representations of Thai women in publications by the post-absolutist government.

New Paradigm of Female Identity (*attalak phuying*) by *Luang* Wichit Watthakan

In the period between 1933 and 1941, the post-revolutionary government contested the image of female identity (*attalak phuying*) previously set by Prince Damrong in the late nineteenth century. According to Damrong, women's role was framed within the family institution. Their major task was to take care of the households, while their public roles only existed in order to support mens' success in government careers (Saichol, 2003). However, under the guidance of *Luang* Wichit Watthakan (born 1898, died 1962), this account of female identity was challenged. Following the Baworadej rebellion in 1933 that attempted to restore the absolutist monarchy, Wichit had become a promoter for the nationalist propaganda of the new government by taking the position of Director General of the Department of Fine Arts in 1934, and he played a major role in drafting the Cultural Mandates or *Ratthaniyom* prior to the outbreak of the Second World War in the Asia-Pacific (Barmé, 1993). *Luang* Wichit's works will be analysed in the following section.

Luang Wichit Watthakan: Nationalist Author

A remarkable phenomenon that occured in the post-absolutist era is the emergence of romantic movements in Thai literature. Craig Reynolds has pointed out that the newly developed notion of "national Thai women", which emerged prior to the revolution of 1932, was a direct product of romantic literature (Reynolds, 2006, p 124). The emergence of romantic novels corresponded to the growing nationalist sentiments among the public. "Just as nationalists were arguing about self-rule in the public sphere,

so the characters in the romantic novels sought self-rule in the private domain", claims Reynolds (Reynolds, 2006, p 124). The independence of love and romance was apparent in literature of the late 1920s, notably in *Luang* Wichit Watthakan's work *Samon* (1929). This love story was a love tragedy between Samon, a female secretary, and Banchong, her married boss. As both characters revealed their fobidden love for each other, they decided to run away from their legal partners to the countryside. Unfortunately, the couple were murdered in their countryside cottage as a result of the planned revenge of Samon's legal husband. The story demonstrates Wichit's great emphasis on the matters of the heart and proved that he believed in woman's equality in the new romantic era (Barmé, 2002).

Apart from *Samon*, Wichit's historical-musical drama released in 1936, *The Blood of Suphan* (*Lueat Suphan*), also promoted a new dimension of Thai woman's identity. The heroine, Duangchan, demonstrated female bravery in battles. Even as a commoner, she led the people of Suphanburi province to fight against Burma without fear. Scot Barmé has claimed that *The Blood of Suphan* was a popular play with the combination of both "romance and death", which was "designed to elicit a strong emotional response in an audience" (Barmé, 1993, p 122). The play was immensely popular as the film remake has emerged in 1970s and its theme song is still well known even nowadays.

Nevertheless, Wichit's most influential work is the Cultural Mandates (*Ratthaniyom*), which affected not only women, but the fundamental structure of Thai society. This set of state directives, launched from the late 1930s, aimed at the progress of the nation by instituting new socio-economic and cultural norms including a number of dramatic social and national transforms ranging from: name change from Siam to Thailand, state encouragement to buy and support local products, language reform, and dress reform (Barmé, 1993). The Cultural Mandates on dress reform in the late 1930s,

in particular, had a massive impact on women and their fashion (see chapter VII *Re-entering the Public Sphere: Wartime and Post-war Roles of Thai Elite Women*). As Barmé states, "Female fashion...consisted of hats, skirts, blouses covering the shoulders, gloves, and high-heeled shoes" (Barmé, 1993, p 157). As a result, female dress reform by the Cultural Mandates brought women into the public sphere under the supervision of the state. As the government engendered these reforms, women were incorporated into the framework of the society that had previously been male-dominated. Even though these changes could not be interpreted as meaning that women were treated as equal subjects to men, they highlighted the expected role of women outside domestic sphere. Therefore, role models for the new female identity became neccessary and that was when the myths of women warriors revived. They will be discussed in the later part of this chapter.

Romantic Fiction

Another genre of Thai literature that popularised the representations of women in the 1930s was romantic fiction. By the revolutionary year of 1932, women's representations are seen in popular short stories of female magazines. A short story, *The Female Bandit Leader* (*Chom Chori*), by a group of authors published in the women's paper *Suphap nari* (Genteel Lady) in 1931 is one examples of these early romantic works. The leading character of this serialised fiction was a woman called Sichan, who was described as a ruthless "aristocratic criminal boss" of Bangkok (Barmé, 2002, p 200). She carried out a number of daring acts including the scandalous robbery of a necklace of a millionaire's daughter. Sichan's character not only challenged the traditional identity of women but also reflected the acceptance of female self-confidence and leadership qualities in Thai society. The story, which ended with the success of

Sichan over the police captain Sano, contested the role of male authority in that even a policemen had to give up to this ruthless female character. As *The Female Bandit Leader* became popular, the paper *Suphap nari* continued to promote images of female martyrs. Two stories of elite women warriors, *Phra Suriyothai phadet suek* (Suriyothai wins the war) and *Thao Thepkrasatri* (Lady Thepkrasatri), were published following *Chom chori* as a "popular genre of writing" (Barmé, 2002, p 202). All of these romantic elements in Thai fiction demonstrate the society's growing acceptance of women into the public sphere.

Royalist Representations of Thai Women in Romantic Novels, 1950s-70s

While civilian women in the regime of Field Marshal Phibun became a vital part of the nationalist policy, the status of the aristocrats declined. The legacy of the Phibun regime was challenged by the coup staged by Marshal Sarit Thanarat (born 1908, died 1963) in 1957, which marked the return of the Thai monarchy's public roles (Thak, 1978). As the military governments entered into the period of the Cold War, representations of women in this period became increasingly prominent in the sphere of literature, which will be explored below.

The novel that best represents Thai women that emerged in this era was by an aristocratic author, Kukrit Pramoj (born 1911, died 1955). *Four Reigns* (*si Phaendin*) (Kukrit, 1962) is one of the most popular novels in Thai history. Set in the reign of King Chulalongkorn, the life of a young aristocratic girl Phloi was portrayed. Phloi moved into the inner court to be part of the retinue of one of the princesses. In the palace, Phloi learned how to read and write and received training in essential domestic skills. The beginning of this novel portrays the inner court as a harmonious place filled with the wisdom of the aristocratic class. However, as Phloi grew up, got married, and moved out of the palace, the reality that she was facing was a completely different world is

revealed to her. Phloi, who worshipped the Thai royal family above all things, found the revolution in 1932 as a shock and unnecessary. Phloi failed to accept that these Western educated men (including one of her sons) plotted the overthrow of her beloved king, and soon she was dissapointed again when she heard the news about the death of King Ananda (Rama VIII). This novel was one of the earliest pieces of fiction that portrayed the lives of palace women within the inner court and outside when they lived as commoners. The lifestyles of the inner court and the outside world are compared and the main character, Phloi, often longs for the life she previously had in the harmonious inner court. This representation of the inner court demonstrates the promotion of the sense of royalism, which was resuming in the Thai society of the early 1960s.

Furthermore, *Four Reigns* also inspired another historical novel with a similar theme, *Under the Royal Umbrella* (*Romchat*) (1971) by Thommayanti (born 1937). Thommayanti is a famous romantic novelist who was influenced by the work of Kukrit Pramoj. Similar to *Four Reigns, Under the Royal Umbrella* illustrates another life of a palace woman, Wat, who was sent to the inner court to become a lady-in-waiting for one of the high-ranking princesses. The novel demonstrates Wat's loyalty to the palace where she grew up and the Thai royal family to whom she owes her life. Both of these novels are evidence of the resuming sense of royalism among Thais in this period when the monarchy regained its influence in Thai society.

Official Royalist Representations of Thai Women Warriors

Myths are essential elements for the solid formation of propaganda, as "without it, the masses would not cling to a certain civilisation or its process of development and crisis" (Ellul, 1965, p 40). The role of myths in the commemoration of women warriors is central to Thai nationalist propaganda. Stories about elite warrior women, such as

Thao Suranari, *Thao* Thepkrasatri, *Thao* Sisunthon and *Somdet-phra* Suriyothai had been recorded in Thailand's chronicles (*phongsawadan)* and rewritten a number of times. As a result, stories that had been orally told were modified by different authors at different times. Therefore, these stories are not neccessarily accurate and can be deemed to be mythical rather than true historical accounts.

This mythical character is apparent in the tale of *Thao* Suranari, a commoner woman whose bravery was recorded briefly in the royal chronicle about the battle between Vientiane and Nakhon Ratchasima. In the official work of *Krom Sinlapakon* (Department of Fine Art), *Thao* Suranari is said to have led 300 female troops in the battle against the rebellius Lao Prince, *Chao* Anuwong in 1825: "These women were disguised as men and fought with only primitive weapons" under the leadership of *Thao* Suranari who led the troop on horse (Krom Sinlapakon, 2004, p 114). Suranari or Mo was born in a commoner family and married to *Phraya* Suradej, the Deputy Governor of Nakhon Ratchasima City, at the age of 24. The official representation of *Thao* Suranari intends to praise her heroic act in defending Nakhon Ratchasima from a foreign force led by *Chao* Anuwong. However, the state's purpose to commemorate a commoner warrior such as *Thao* Suranari is rather ambiguous. Saipin Kaewngamprasert, a Thai scholar, has written one of the most contested theses *Politics Behind Thao Suranari's Monument* (*kan meuang nai anusawari thao suranari,* 1995). The author argues that the truth about *Thao* Suranari's experience in battle is still obscure. The royal chronicle of King Nangklao (Rama III), in which she is mentioned, notes the involvement of women in the battle of Thung Samrit, but does clearly state that it was *Thao* Suranari who led the female troops as official popular texts have claimed. (Saipin, 1995). The issue of the ethnic Lao population of the Khorat plateau should be added into the analysis here. As the rewriting of the royal chronicles took place during the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V), when centralisation and the promotion of Thai-ness was first initiated, the

story of *Thao* Suranari became useful to the central Thai state. Reviving or reinventing the myth of *Thao* Suranari implies that 'they' (Lao) have harmed 'us' (Thai), whereby all of the people who were born within the boundary of *Chat Thai* ('the Thai nation'), where *chat* has a dual meaning of nation and birth, were regarded as Thai nationals (Thongchai, 1994). This evidence confirms the discussed significance of royal-national history that supports the commemoration of local heroes and heroines into the master narrative of Thai official historiography (Thongchai, 2001). *Thao* Suranari safeguarded Siam from foreign invations and helped Siam stay united under the king of the Bangkok court. Under this royal-national narrative, *Chao* Anuwong was seen as an enemy of the Thai state, while in fact he had the right to claim the ethnic Lao-speaking people who lived in Nakhon Ratchasima. Therefore, the story of *Thao* Suranari could have been reinvented or mythicised by the Thai state. Later, after the crisis had ended, the Royal Palace gave Suranari rewards including swords, clothes, and the title *thao*.[3] Ever since then, she has been known as *Thao* Suranari and is currently also worshiped by Thais as *Ya* Mo (Grandmother Mo) and her official representation as a heroine who saved the nation is still very much alive in official discourse.

Thao Thepkrasatri and *Thao* Sisunthon, or Chan and Muk, were two sisters of Thalang City, nowadays Phuket province. Chan and Muk were daughters of the governor of Thalang. Chan, the elder one, was married twice to aristocrats of the southern region while Muk's marital status was not known. When Burma attacked Siam in 1785, Chan and Muk defended the city of Thalang on behalf of Chan's sick husband, *Phraya* Surintararacha (Krom Sinlapakon, 2004). The chronicle has recorded that they led local troops of men and women to defend Thalang against Burmese attacks. Nonetheless, the story of Chan and Muk has some ambiguous aspects. First, the marriage of Chan was rather unclear. Analysis of the chronicles of Thalang provides

[3] *Thao* is an equivalent title to lady. See Saipin Kaewngamprasert, *Kan-meuang Nai Amusawari thao Suranari* (Bangkok: Matichon, 1995).

evidence that Chan married twice as the information about the actual identity of her husband during the war was rather confusing (Sunai, 1985). Second, in the official text by the Fine Art Department, Chan was represented as a faithful elite Thai woman who came to Bangkok to pay respect to the king after the war had ended (Krom Sinlapakon, 2004). Nonetheless, the evidence illustrates that Chan only visited Bangkok in order to claim her tin debts rather than to pay respect to the King (Sunai, 1985). Another aspect of the historical account of Chan and Muk that has never been emphasised is their ethnic background. This avoidance was due to the fact that the mother of Chan and Muk was of Malay origin as recorded in a number of chronicles including the chronicle of Thalang (Sunai, 1985). As official representations of women warriors including Chan and Muk are subjected to the revisions of the central government body in Bangkok, mentioning the non-Thai origin of these heroines could undermine the ideological purpose of the official narrative. According to the chronicle, Chan and Muk, like *Thao* Suranari of Nakhon Ratchasima, were given the titles *Thao* Thepkrasatri and *Thao* Sisunthon, respectively, from Bangkok. However, although the two sisters of Thalang might have taken leading roles in battle against Burma, their bravery should be seen as provincial defence rather than national sacrifice as often portrayed in official national historiography. Once again, the story of Chan and Muk still remains a myth that has been corporated into official Thai historiography.

Queen Suriyothai is the most popular queen warrior in official Thai history. Her story, as well, remains as mythical as the tales of *Thao* Suranari, and the two sisters of Thalang. Suriyothai was a queen of King Mahachakaphat of Ayuthaya, who is credited with having saved her husband in battle when Burma attacked Ayuthaya in 1548 (Krom Sinlapakon, 2004). As it is widely undertood in Thai official texts, Suriyothai disguised herself in male soldier uniform and secretly followed her husband into the battle. When her husband was about to be charged by the Burmese prince, she attempted to save him

and was killed (Amphon, 2003). Official representations of Suriyothai demonstrate her dedication to the nation and her husband. These two qualities have been promoted as a noble attributes. However, a contemporary Thai historian, Sujit Wongthes, has argued that the myth of Suriyothai could have been reinvented by King Vajiravudh. The author has claimed that King Vajiravudh encouraged the commemoration of Suriyothai by permitting the construction of the first memorial site to her near Sopsawan temple in Ayutthaya Province, where locals believed her body was cremated (Sujit, 2001). Sujit's argument conforms with Vajiravudh's nationalist policy in the early twentieth century. Therefore, the claim that the myth of Suriyothai was recently reinvented is rather persuasive.

All three tales of Siamese female warriors reflect certain state objectives. The stories of *Thao* Suranari and the two sisters of Thalang are likely to be related to the state's promotion of Thai-ness, and the story of Suriyothai revived the greatness of Ayuthaya kings (Amphon, 2003). With the evidence showing that tales of these female warriors have been reinvented repeatedly, their historical accuracy is not guaranteed. Therefore, they are more of the form of myths rather than valid historical accounts, as they have been represented and praised in official historiography.

Recent Commemorations of National Heroines

Apart from official publications, women warriors are also commemorated by the Thai state in various provincial monuments. These statues of national heroines first emerged in 1933 with the construction of the *Thao* Suranari monument in Nakhon Ratchasima Province. The portrayed images of these heroines demonstrate the post-revolutionary state's emphasis on the social class and status of women. Among the four female warriors, only *Thao* Suranari came from a commoner background, while the two sisters of Thalang and Suriyothai were from aristocratic backgrounds. With this basic

information, *Thao* Suranari's representational images have been adjusted in order to fit the state's intention to promote central Thai-ness and the civilian government. These two objectives in the construction of Suranari's monument will be elaborated in the following part of this chapter.

Saipin has pointed out that the clothing of the statue of *Thao* Suranari (figure 1.1) illustrates the central Thai style of elite women of the early Bangkok era, not the dress of nineteenth century Lao women of Nakhon Ratchasima (Saipin, 1995, p 115). This reflects the state's intention to subject representations of Mo to central Thai identity while Nakhon Ratchasima, where the monument is situated, is in the Northeast of Thailand, which has a strong Lao ethnic base. The Bangkok government did not only insert Thai-ness into *Thao* Suranari's clothing, but also enhanced her social status. Even though *Thao* Suranari was married to a Deputy Governor of Nakhon Ratchasima, she came from a non-aristocratic family. This type of dress on her statue, long sarong and a shawl, is not a common style of a commoner attire outside the royal palace in the Bangkok period, but the style of fashion relfected on this statue nonetheless shows that a commoner could enhance her position through the defence of the nation.

Figure 1.1 Statue of *Thao* Suranari in Early Bangkok period costume, Nakhon Ratchasima Province (Nakhon Ratchasima Province (2011).

Therefore, this can explain the state's agenda to uphold the female warrior from the non-aristocratic background in order to create a role model for the common women in the era of post-revolutionary nationalism.

In fact, the construction of *Thao* Suranari's monument was considered as the revolutionary state's response to the Baworadej rebellion. This "royalist counter-revolution" took place in October 1933, and identified the split of opinion in the post-absolutist period (Barmé, 1993, p 61). Prince Baworadej Kritdakon (born 1877, died 1953), a cousin of King Prajadhipok, led rebel forces in an attempt to overthrow the *Khana Ratsadon* (People's Party) government under their prominent leaders, such as Phahon Pholphayuhasena, Plaek Phibunsongkhram, and Pridi Banomyong. The royalists made the claim to convince the masses that the People's Party government wanted to establish a communist dictatorship. Within three weeks of the conflict that resulted in a 10,000 baht reward for Prince Baworadej's capture, the government had completely crushed the rebellion (Barmé, 1993, p 85). Baworadej had retreated to the northeast region, where provincial garrisons were gathered to assist him with the rebellion, and he finally fled to Cambodia. It is not a coincidence that the monument of *Thao* Suranari, which is situated in Nakhon Ratchasima Province, was only erected after the crushing of the Baworadej rebellion (Saipin, 1995). The construction of the monument, even though seen as the commemoration site of a provincial heroine, presents a rather complicated interpretation. Saipin has pointed out that *Thao* Suranari's monument aimed to strengthen the power of the 'new' government in its continued conflict with the 'old' regime or the royalists (Saipin, 1995). Because *Thao* Suranari was a commoner, her symbolic representation announced that commoners can also be recognised in history as much as members of royalty. The People's Party government, which promoted civilian movements, wanted to use the commoner female warrior figure

as an ideological tool to fight the royalists. Furthermore, Nakhon Ratchasima Province is also considered to be the gateway to the Northeastern region (*Isan*) where the forces of the Baworadej rebellion were recruited. In choosing *Thao* Suranari, whose origin was from this province, the revolutionary government showed its intention to reaffirm its victory over the royalists in the region. Therefore, the construction of *Thao* Suranari's monument and the post-Baworadej rebellion's situation are closely linked. *Thao* Suranari, as a female warrior, appeared at the right time when the People's Party government needed to reassert its position in the society.

Following the installation of the *Thao* Suranari Monument, Thai women warriors were seen in the official commemorations again in the 1960s and 1970s. As the sense of royalism was restored, the Thai government also entered into the period of the Cold War in the mid-1950s. Supported by the United States of America, the military governments of Marshal Sarit Thanarat and Thanom Kittikhachon between 1958 and 1972 made the battle against communists their top priority. The commemorations of elite women such as *Thao* Thepkrasatri, *Thao* Sisunthon, and also Princess Vibhavadi Rangsit by the Thai state will be explored as part of the symbolic defence from communism.

Figure 1.2 Monument of *Thao* Thepkrasatri and *Thao* Sisunthon, Phuket Province (Phuket Today, 2006)

The momument of *Thao* Thepkrasatri and *Thao* Sisunthon (figure 1.2), the two elite women who were said to have saved Thalang[4] from Burmese attack, was erected in 1967 when Field Marshal Thanom Kittikhachon was Prime Minister. The geo-political factor played a significant role in the commemoration of the two sisters of Thalang. With a large number of Chinese settlers in Phuket and an increasing influence of communism upon Thailand, the myth of the sisters of Thalang was revived in order to fight the state's enemies. The Thai government, under Thanom, had established a firm relationship with the United States of America and at that time the communists were seen as the enemies of the state. Communism had spread its influence to Thailand via the decolonisation movements in the neighbouring countries, such as North Vietnam and Laos (Phairot, 1975, p 6). By 1964, North Vietnamese had employed communist propaganda on Vietnamese settlers in Thailand to form a "Communist front" in the Northeastern region (Phairot, 1975, p 6). A similar approach was used by Chinese communists to spread the anti-hierachical doctrine amongst Chinese descendents in Thailand. Given that Phuket Province, although situated in Southern Thailand, is enriched with a Chinese heritage and population, the Thai government of that period feared that communism would spread among the Chinese Thai population in the area. As a result, the monument of Thalang's sisters demonstrates the state's implicit attempt to propagate the anti-communist policy. The representation of both heroines depicts them as guardians of the city during the war: they carry swords and their eyes look out for enemies, which were then the communists.

Another elite woman whom the government of the 1970s upheld as a national heroine was Her Serene Highness Princess Vibhavadi Rangsit (born 1920 died in 1977). Princess Vibhavadi was a devoted secretary of Queen Sirikit (Nuanchan et al, 1977). She spent the last days of her life visiting the field army in the southern provinces of

[4] Nowadays one of the districts of Phuket Province.

Thailand, where she died when the helicopter she was travelling in was shot by communist forces in 1977. In memory of her great work, the government built a memorial monument for Princess Vibhavadi in Suratthani Province (figure 1.3), where she passed away, in order to commemorate her sacrifice in fighting for the nation against communism (Nuanchan et al, 1977).

Figure 1.3 One of the monuments of Princess Vibhavadi Rangsit, Suratthani Province (Donsak Community Library, n.d.).

This was probably the first monument of a modern national female heroine rather than mythical heroine from the royal chronicles. The commemoration of Princess Vibhavadi fits with the then military government's policy. Her tragic death gives evidence of the rehabilitation of the monarchy and royalism of the period of 1970s, and the Thai government's anti-communism.

After the era of the Cold War, other women warriors from the past were also revived in the 1990s by the popularisation of Queen Suriyothai (born: unknown, died: 1548) and Princess Suphankanlaya (born: 1552, died: unknown) as martyrs for the Thai nation. Their images were also greatly commodified by the end of the twentieth century.

Figure 1.4 Queen Suriyothai Monument portrays the battle scene of 1548, Ayutthaya Province (Royjaithai, 2009)

The image of Suriyothai as a martyr for the nation and a role-model of a faithful wife was revived in 1992 with the construction of a commemoration monument in Ayuthaya and latter the production of the film *Suriyothai* (Chatrichalerm, 2001) that had begun as part of a royal-sponsored project after the economic crash of 1997, also known as *Tom Yum Kung Crisis*. It is not a coincidence that the monument of Suriyothai was completed in the same year as Queen Sirikit's 60th anniversary. So the commemoration of the great sacrifice of a heroic warrior queen could be seen as part of the state's project in collaboration with Queen Sirikit's anniversary cerebration.

Suroyothai was once again revived in film after the trauma of the *Tom Yum Kung* economic crisis, which had triggered "a national search for the golden age of antiquity; the golden age where everything was good" (Amphon, 2003, p 301). This phenomenon was evidenced in the rapid boom of period film productions, such as *Bang Rajan* (Thanit, 2000), which recieved tremendous popularity among the Thai audience and at international film festivals (Amphon, 2003, p 301). *Suriyothai* served as a symbol of Siam's glorious past, which aimed to intall a sense of Thai pride in the audience in

the period of post-economic cirisis. Once again, the government had manipulated the context of time in order to engender a unified sentiment. Suriyothai appeared in the film as a royalist symbol and as a figure of Thai pride in the moment where unity was most needed and the hope that stabilibity would reestablish.

In relation to strengthening the Thai pride, the commemoration of Princess Suphankanlaya (born: 1552, died: unknown) has been another popular figure since the mid-1990s. Her first monument was erected in 1997 (figure 1.5) by the initiative of Venerable Ngon Sorayo and the support of the Thai army (Thai Veterans, n.d.).

Figure 1.5 Monument of Princess Suphankanlaya, Phitsanulok Province (Chawiwan, 1998)

This Buddhist monk of Phitsanulok province claimed that the princess came to see him in his dreams and requested his help to bring her spirit back to Siam from Burma (Phensupa, 2012). Because of his book about the princess, her image became widely famous, and according to Phensupa, "Suphankanlaya had enhanced her status from a princess to a goddess" (Phensupa, 2012). She became commodified as people started to worship her images. In addition to that, the film *Suphankanlaya* (Warayut, 2004) was also released, which depicted her life under the pressure and discrimination when she

was at the court of Hanthawaddy in Burma. The representation of Suphankanlaya reflected the concept of Thai pride. To Thai people, she represents the integrity and pride of a Thai elite woman. The princess's sacrifice reflects her love and loyalty for Siam. Although memory of the re-imagined Princess Suphankanlaya has only recently been rediscovered, her image became immensely popular especially among business entrepreneurs after the 1997 economic crisis. One of the most prominent devotees of Suphankanlaya is Nalini Phaibun, owner of Giffarine enterprise that produces and sells beauty and health products. Nalini also had a vision of the princess in her dreams and the princess then became the inspiration for the establishing of her company after the economic crash. Nowadays, all 106 Giffarine business centres house the image of Suphankanlaya and Nalini also produces amulets and calendars every year for distributing to other worshippers of the princess (Sutthikhun, 2007). Even though her cult began outside the state, her image has been appropriated to the state's policy.

Current Representations of Women in Non-Mainstream Publications and Popular History

While official publications still represent women with a sense of royal-nationalism, the academic studies on women have been growing in the recent decades with a variety of new issues (Thongchai, 2014). This part of the chapter concentrates on recent publications by the independent publishing company, Matichon. Drawing on the works of Thai academics, Matichon publishes a number of articles and books on social history with increasing representations of women. Articles in *Sinlapa Watthanatham*, the popular magazine of Matichon that features social and cultural Thai studies, will first be summarised and followed by recently released books by the same publisher. In

addition to publications by Matichon, selected works on popular history books that offer innovative and non-mainstream views on Thai women will be analysed in the final part.

Representations of Women in *Sinlapa Watthanatham* Magazine

Women are being represented more in recent Thai scholarly works than in the official history discussed in previous sections. The magazine *Sinlapa Watthanatham* (Art and Culture), published by Matichon Group, offers a new dimension on Thai historiography through its collections of a wide range of articles on art, history, and culture by Thai scholars. The topic of women, in particular, has appeared regularly in the magazine. *Sinlapa Watthanatham* magazine first emerged in 1979 at the initiation of a famous independent writer, Sujit Wongthes, and was taken over by Matichon in 1988 (Lysa, 1998: Lysa, 2000). The takeover changed the direction of the magazine from its first issues that were critical and posed challenges to the official history to "a glossy, tasteful magazine purveying history and culture as life-style", which attracted increasing numbers of middle-class readers (Lysa, 1998, p 338). It was after Matichon's takeover that *Sinlapa Watthanatham* magazine began to include articles on Thai women in its issues with the new focus on lifestyles that aimed to open up the popular market. Even though this magazine was commercialised in order to expand its readership, its articles on women and gender issues have greatly contributed to the study of Thai women's history that is under-represented in the official history.

In the recent volumes of *Sinlapa Watthanatham* magazine, the articles on early female education by the lecturer of Architecture at Chulalongkorn University, Yuwadi Siri, are presented. Articles featuring the history of the foundings of girls' schools, such as Satri Witthaya, Watthana Academy, and St-Joseph Convent by the same author were published in *Sinlapa Watthanatham* (Yuwadi, 2011a: 2011b: 2011c). Apart from the

topic of women's education, the exploration of the unfair treatment of women in history is also another popular issue. Pawini Bunnag's article "About husbands and wives through legal cases from the Fifth reign to the Seventh reign" (*rueang phua phua mia mia nai samai ratchakan thi 5 thueng ratchakan thi 7 phan kotmai khadikhwam lae dika*) in *Sinlapa Watthanatham* magazine, stated that marriage legal cases dated from Rama V to Rama VII reflected that women were regarded as the property of men (Pawini, 2011). Pawini argued that the legal system is not to be criticised for this; rather, the social structure that set the roles of males and females ought to be criticised. Kamthon Liangsatchatham's article, "*Amdaeng* Muean's Petition in the Fourth Reign" (*dika khong amdaeng Muean nai ratchakan thi si*), also brought up a famous legal case that gave the voice to commoner women in Thai historiography in general (Kamthon, 2012). Muean, a commoner woman, decided to send her petition to King Mongkut when she was sold for marriage by her parents. She requested her right to choose her own partner and this was considered as the first time the voice of a commoner woman was heard in the royal-determined legal case.

Apart from the previously discussed articles on female education and early female legal rights, *Sinlapa Watthanatham* also has recently brought out another powerful article, "The Monogamy of the Nation" *(phua dieaw mia dieaw haeng chat)*, developed from the Master's thesis *Monogamy in Modern Thai Society, 1870s-1940s* by Surachet Suklarpkit (2014), which relates to gender relations of Phibun's Cultural Mandates' regime (1939-1942). The Field Marshal carried out a number of social reforms that had impacted women's representations in the society. Surachet's article is one of the latest articles published in *Sinlapa Watthatham* that discusses Phibun's nationalist policies. The author discusses the promotion of monogamy as the way to enhance the Thai nation to become a modernised country (where polygamy is not recognised). Guidelines for how husbands should treat their wives were released by the

government and mass civil marriages were promoted throughout the country. As a result, the status of women improved as an equal partner to their husbands under the nationalist regime (Surachet, 2014).

The above summary of various articles in *Sinlapa Watthanatham* magazine demonstrates the enthusiasm of Thai scholars in the recovery of women's roles in Thai history. While the Siamese women's status is subordinated to men's in mainstream historiography, articles in this magazine illustrate that women had more roles than is represented in the official literature. The articles offer some interesting aspects of Siamese women that were not seen in Thai mainstream historiography and can be further explored. The above-mentioned articles provide a touchstone for the development of the main argument of this thesis that women of both aristocratic and non-aristocratic backgrounds had more active roles in the public sphere in this period of modern Thai history. Based on the voices of women as core source materials, this thesis will further explore the social and political roles of women in elaborate detail.

Recent Works by Thai Scholars: Matichon Group

Matichon Group has also published a number of books which represent women and gender relations in Thai historiography. Saichol Satyanurak discussed the creation of identity in various aspects of Thai society in her work, *Prince Damrong and the Construction of Thai Identity and Class of The Siamese* (*Somdetkromphraya Damrong Rajanubhab: kan sang attalak mueangthai lae chan khong chao sayam*) (Saichol, 2003). This work is a study on Prince Damrong's creation of the national identity (*attalak*) of Thailand's society and culture. The author mentions in the introduction of the book that Prince Damrong's attempt was based on 'conceptualisation' and 'representation' in order to elaborate the imagined explanation of who Thais are and how Thais should live

(Saichol, 2003, p 5). This conceptualised representation is used as an indicator to define status, roles, power relations, social behaviours, and even relationships between Thais and 'others'. The author also further points out that the most important expected outcome of the creation of the national identity of *attalak* is to make Thais conscious of their pride in being born Thais (Saichol, 2003).

Women's role, according to Damrong, was framed within the domestic space as that of housewives whose major duty is to take care of the household, while the society would accept a woman's role in the public space only if that role is to support male's success in government career (Saichol, 2003, p 280). Saichol analysed the works of Damrong in regard to various aspects of Thai women including education and the roles of females as wives and mothers. Damrong stated clearly that female education should be different from male education, in which the key to educating woman is for them to maintain to their reputation and virginity rather than aim for academic achievement (Saichol, 2003). As Saichol notes, he even further pointed out the need to separate schools for *phudi* (noble elites) and *phrai* (commoners) (Saichol, 2003, p 268). Nonetheless, the most interesting emphasis on Damrong's work in Saichol's book is on women's subordinate role as cultural agents. Saichol concludes from her study of Damrong's writings that in the view of this prince, cultural adaptation in response to the West was seen as men's task. According to Damrong, male aristocrats were the people who decided to adapt their elite lifestyle to Western values. Females, on the other hand, should support males' decisions. In other words, women were not at all seen as agents for adapting Siam to Western modernity. Their social roles were subjected to male power even in cultural realms. Nonetheless, the more recent work on *The Queen Regent* (*Somdet Regent*) by Darani Sihathai emphasises the public role of Queen Saowapha when she took the position of King Chulalongkorn's regent when he was away on his travels to Europe in 1897 (Darani, 2008). The author explains that political tensions

both inside and outside Siam contributed to this appointment. Darani pointed out that Chulalongkorn used his '*siwilai*' mission as a reason to appoint his queen consort Saowapha as his regent while he visited Europe, despite the views of other male aristocrats who might have opposed the decision. By doing this, Chulalongkorn believed that Western colonial powers would start to view Siam as a civilised nation and also respond to and repudiate the claim of the inferior status of Siamese women. Darani's work contributes to the historiography of Siamese women whose public roles have been under-represented, although it has certain limitations. The author underlined that the power of the Queen Regent was subject to King Chulalongkorn's approval. However, in contrast, this dissertation views the role of Saowapha as regent as having had more genuine significance. The role of Queen Regent Saowapha marks the emergence of women in the public sphere, which will be further explored in this thesis. The political tensions that Siam was facing were crucial to the appointment of the Queen Regent, this title granted the queen significant power that enhanced the status of Siamese women in general. She supported female education by sponsoring the founding of Sunanthalai Girl's School in 1892 and the nursing school (*Rong-rian Phadung-kan*) in 1896 (see chapter III *Early Female Education in Siam: 1870-1910*). In administration, the queen held cabinet meetings, attended royal ceremonies, and maintained diplomatic relations especially with the major powers, such as when she received ambassadors from France, Great Britain, Germany, and Japan in 1897 (Darani, 2008). This evidence shows that, much more than just an agent of the King, Saowapha set herself as an example of a Siamese woman who had public roles for first time.

Popular Historiography

Thai popular historiography is another genre of literature that deserves an in-depth discussion here. The first works for the popular market in Thailand emerged in the

1970s with the concentration on the 'miscellanies' of social history and the use of historical photographs, drawn from official and private collections (Lysa, 1998, p 336). Abundant sources from the reign of King Chulalongkorn, in particular, sell well in the popular market. Images and stories of the great reign of King Chulalongkorn and his numerous consorts are popular for this genre of works. The idea that "the king [of Siam] practiced polygamy not for leisure but for the stability of the country" served as a fundamental background to these popular history books, such as the work *First Love of Rama V* (*rak raek khong ratchakan thi ha,* 1978) by Lawan Chotamara, which features the relationships Chulalongkorn had with his consorts (Lysa, 1998, p 337). By the 1980s, popular histories developed a new trend in their representation of women, but Chulalongkorn's consorts are still the predominant stories. The works that most stood out in this period were articles from the previously discussed magazine *Sinlapa Watthanatham* (Art and Culture, 1979), which aimed to widen the middle-class readership by emphasising the consorts' personalities and their professional strengths (Lysa, 1998, p 340). In these works, the models of appropriate women were created for middle-class female readers to follow. Nevertheless, recent popular history books from the 1990s tend to focus on the discoveries of new groundbreaking issues as their selling point. Among contemporary popular history writers, works of three authors stand out --- Anake Nawigamune, Wibul Wichitwathakan, and Thepchu Thapthong. These authors are non-academics who have published a number of books on popular history and have become well known in the popular market. Their selected popular works on women's representations are summarised and discussed below.

Anake Nawigamune, a private collector, has published a number of works on the nineteenth and early twentieth century. One of his works that highlights the representations of women is *Siamese Women* (*ying chao sayam*) (Anake, 1999). The author includes a series of stories about women in Thai history in *Siamese Women*. The

most spectacular chapter is the discussion of same sex erotic practice among palace women or *len phuean* between *Mom* Ped and *Khun* Mong. Although the author's source material, a poem by the nineteenth century poet Khun Suwan, cannot be considered as solid historical evidence, it is a useful alternative when empirical evidence is limited. The author mentioned that the story reflected a scandal in the Siamese court in the reign of King Nangklao. Interestingly, Anake's narrative style is more entertaining than informative. The author's major objective in this book, as it seems, is to promote a new style of historical narrative as story telling. His choice of topics that are not widely discussed, or have never been discussed in Thai-language literature before, highlighted the author's motive to be groundbreaking.

Wibul Wichitwathakarn's work *Siamese Women in the Past* (*satri sayam nai adit*), offers a similar style of narration as Anake's (Wibul, 1999). This book presents the roles of women in Thailand since the ancient period of Chiang Saen up to King Mongkut's reign. The work includes not only women who were Siamese nationals but also foreign women who were involved in Siam. The role of Anna Leonowens is strongly emphasised in this work. Stories that were omitted from official historiography are present in Wibul's works, such as stories about Chiaw and Captain Smith, and consorts (*chaochom*) of the reign of King Mongkut. The interesting aspects of these two narratives lie in the innovative approaches the author used. Wibul presented the love tragedy between Nang Chiaw and Captain Smith beyond the framework of official history. The chapter narrates the story about a marriage between an American captain and a Thai woman. It demonstrates that Siamese women were not passive in the face of domestic violence. Her alcoholic husband regularly beat Chiaw and she wanted to stand up against this unfair treatment by seeking a relationship with a Thai man. At the end of the story, things got out of control. Chiaw and her Thai lover planned to murder her foreign husband. The author has mentioned that Chiaw should not have been tried only

by the Siamese legal court but could have had the extra-territorial right as an American wife. At this point, Wibul has challenged the framework of Thai historiography. In criticising that the decision of the Thai judges was extremely unfair to Chiaw and her lover proved an innovative motive (Wibul, 1999). The author used the same challenging approach to the story about the king's consorts under the reign of King Mongkut. The mainstream popular history wants the readership to believe that the kings practised polygamy in order to pursue political stability, such as the previously mentioned Lawan's *First Love of Rama the Fifth*. Wibul had attacked this argument by stating that Rama IV considered polygamy as personal pleasure, as can be seen in the way he compared himself in being less attractive to women than the *wang na*,[5] *Phra* Pinklao (who was younger than him). Moreover, it became apparent that the population of palace women was increasing rapidly. As a result, the king decided to allow these ladies to leave the inner court. This aspect, once again, stresses that the inner palace women did enjoy freedom to a certain extent, unlike the women's image that has been represented in official history (Wibul, 1999).

Parallel to the works by Anake and Wibul is another popular history, *Thai Women in the Past* (*phuying thai nai adit*) (Thepchu, 2003). Different aspects of Siamese women are illustrated in this book by Thepchu Thapthong through photographs that the author has collected. However, the time scope of this book is not clearly stated. The previously overlooked roles of women are the major emphases of this book. Stories that are told in this work include the female students who went to study abroad, special qualities of Thai women in the past, prostitution, love potion, and even palace lesbian women (*len pheuan*). The only characteristic of this book that differed from Wibul's is the significant use of photographs, more similar to the work of Anake.

[5] The title of Siam's second king during Mongkut's reign.

All three books of the popular authors noted above introduced the studies of women in the most entertaining and attractive way to the wide audience with the preferred popular style. Although they are non-academic works, Anake, Wibul, and Thepchu have revealed new discoveries on women's history through their private historical collections. These works demonstrate that the mainstream historiography is rather biased and limited in its representation of women. Critiques on mainstream publications are explored in the next part of this chapter.

Critiques of Previous Official Publications and Recent Studies of Women

Representations of women by the mainstream Thai historiography focus on the society's expectations of women under the concept of royal-national history, rather than their active roles. While the emphasis was placed on the women's duty for the king (under absolutist monarchy) and to the nation (under civilian government), their active roles in other aspects were hardly mentioned. Both Damrong's biographies of the king's consorts in cremation volumes and *Luang* Wichit Watthakan's nationalist publications strongly confirm this critique. While Damrong's works focus on praising the aristocratic qualities of the king's consorts, Wichit's works concentrate on the expected roles of women as part of his nationalist campaign and the policies of the Phibun regime. A similar approach was seen in the commemoration of women warriors. The duty of the nation was imposed upon their official stories and images with the purpose of implementing the state policy at the time. All of these lines of evidence suggest that representations of women in the mainstream Thai historiography are framed with biases and dominant social expectations.

On the other hand, non-mainstream publications of womens studies, although limited, are still growing in number. The recent scholarly works discussed here focus on the roles of women, which had been under-represented in the mainstream Thai historiography. This demonstrates that the topic of Thai women has received increasing attention from both the Thai academic community and independent writers in recent years. Nevertheless, the majority of recent studies on women, as demonstrated, concentrate on the supporting roles of women rather than their active roles. And also to strengthen the image of aristocratic elites and monarchs, royal-nationalism still serves as the central concept of most studies.

This dissertation, therefore, aims to fill the gaps in the previous publications that feature women's representations by arguing that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Thai women were active in their roles and voices in both private and public spaces. Although Siamese women's public life in the absolutist period was more of the royal public life (limited roles of palace women in the offices of administration), their roles deserve further study. By looking at aristocratic women's positions within the inner court of the absolutist regime, the enhanced level of women's literacy, the rise of female voices in the print media, and the active political roles of commoner women in the post-absolutist years, this study will further contribute to the new body of knowledge on women in Thai history. This work will also consider the previously overlooked issue of class competition between aristocratic women and commoner women. Through these analyses, this study will be able to offer the following distinctive contributions to the studies of Siamese women in the transitional period.

The Contributions of This Study

The first distinctive contribution of this thesis is in its aim to study the public roles of women from the last decades of the absolutist period to the early years of the post-absolutist regime. While previous studies of women focus on their roles within the domestic sphere and expectations of men, this thesis intends to demonstrate that Thai women had more active roles in the male-dominant spheres than has been mentioned in previous works. As Thai accounts put women subordinate to men, female status in these works tends to be confined within the boundary of the official historiography that supports the dominant roles of men. The book *Prince Damrong and the Construction of Thai Identity and Class of The Siamese* (*Somdetkromphraya Damrong Rajanubhab: kan sang attalak mueangthai lae chan khong chao sayam*) (Saichol, 2003), which was discussed above, is an example of work by Thai scholars that demonstrates the male expectations of Siamese women. The author notes that Prince Damrong clearly made a distinction between male and female roles in Thai society. This includes, the different form of education for women that should be distinctive from the education offered to men, as well as the clear division of roles between men and women (Saichol, 2003).

The second distinctive contribution of this dissertation compared to the previous studies of women is the emphasis on class competition between aristocratic women and commoner women. Although in *Woman, Man, Bangkok: Love, Sex, and Popular Culture in Thailand* (Barmé, 2002) Barmé has explored the emergence of Siamese women in the popular cultural scenes such as in the print media industry, the significance of the transition of power from aristocratic to commoner women is still overlooked. This thesis's second focus is on the class competition between the two groups of women. The decline of the inner court after the reign of King Chulalongkorn marked the decay of aristocratic womens' place in the public sphere. This study looks at the struggle of power of the aristocratic women in relation to the revolution of 1932 that

saw the rise of civilians in the political sphere. The competition between the two groups of women since the pre-revolutionary years in education and in the print media industry will also be discussed in detail.

Beside the stated distinctive contributions, this dissertation concentrates on presenting women as active subjects rather than passive objects, as they have been seen in previous studies. *Sinlapa Watthanatham* articles offer new perspectives of Siamese gender roles. For example, the article "the Monogamy of the Nation" (*phua dieaw mia dieaw haeng chat*) (Surachet, 2014) explains the promotion of monogamy and the improved status of women as equal partners to their husbands under the nationalist regime of Phibun. Nevertheless, women are still seen as passive objects of the state in this article. In fact, women were more active in the public sphere of Phibun's regime than they are portrayed in Surachet's work. The social and political roles of Phibun's wife, La-iad, and other wives of politicians who became active state agents will also be recovered in this dissertation. The goal is to demonstrate that women were active subjects of their own representations. By bringing out case studies of women who were socially and politically active, this study presents another innovative contribution to the study of women history.

In addition, the use of distinctive source of materials in this work will redress issues of women that have been overlooked in previous studies. While the previously discussed literature on women is structured around official evidence, this thesis assembles a variety of source materials including a collection of women's magazines, memoirs and cremation volumes. Primary accounts by aristocratic women are the core materials of chapter II, *Fai Nai (Inner City): King Chulalongkorn 1868-1910* and chapter III, *Early Female Education in Siam 1870-1910,* which focuses on the roles of aristocratic women in the absolutist period. Chapter VI, *Defining 'Femininity': The Emerging Competition between Aristocratic and Commoner Women* and chapter V, *The*

Rise of Women's Print Media: Competing Women's Voices in the Pre-revolutionary Years 1906-1932 make extensive use of women's magazines to portray the voice of women in the pre-revolutionary years. Chapter VI, *The Decline and End of Fai Nai: The Struggles of Aristocratic Women in the Public Sphere 1910-1942* and chapter VII, *Re-entering the Public Sphere: Wartime and Post-war Roles of Thai Elite Women* deal with both personal accounts of women and official records in order to demonstrate the relationship between the post-absolutist government and the women of the era.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored representations of women in five categories of Thai historiography (i) Prince Damrong Rajanubhap's works in cremation volumes of aristocratic women, (ii) official nationalist publications of *Luang* Wichit Watthakan, (iii) contemporary romantic fiction, (iv) recent official publications and commemorations of women warriors, and (v) non-mainstream studies on women including selected popular history books. With the only exception on some recent scholarly works, the result of this exploration demonstrates that Thai women's active roles in the public sphere are still under-represented in the dominant mainstream representations of women.

This critique of women's representations serves as the foundation to the development of this thesis' objective to demonstrate the active roles of women that have been under-represented, and address the issue of class competition between aristocratic women and the commoner elite women. To achieve this, the following chapters will concentrate on using distinctive source materials produced by women, such as their personal memoirs, and magazines in order to argue that women had pivotal roles in the public sphere in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Thailand more than has

previously been represented by mainstream Thai historiography. As the first representations of women appeared in the late absolutist regime in the works of Prince Damrong on biographies of palace women, this will be the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter II

Fai Nai (Inner City): King Chulalongkorn 1868-1910

Introduction

This chapter aims to demonstrate that the inner court of King Chulalongkorn's reign underwent a significant reform, which highlights the emergence of aristocratic women's public roles. As the public administration of Siam was reformed with the focus on the promotion of centralisation, the organisation of the inner court also experienced this period as one of transition. This chapter will first consider the prevailing stereotype of the inner court women (*nang nai*)[6] in nationalist historiography as peaceful domestic lives as being, to a great extent, influenced by the Victorian-era concept of domesticity. I will then argue that the transition of inner court women from the domestic sphere into the public sphere had begun by the end of the nineteenth century as the result of the palace's new organisation. The administration reform of the Bangkok court that King Chulalongkorn introduced in parallel to the national centralisation reforms allowed palace women to develop their skills, other than the domestic ones, and they eventually emerged in the public sphere that had been reserved for men.

[6] The expressions 'inner court women', 'palace women', or '*nang nai*' refer to all women (of all ranks) who resided in the private quarters of the palace (*fai nai*). All three expresions will be used throughout this chapter.

Fai Nai (Inner City): The Physical Organisation

In order to understand the transition of women of the inner court of Bangkok, the physical organisation of the palace is first to be addressed here. The royal palace of Bangkok during the reign of King Chulalongkorn was organised into three major zones. First, the outer court (*khet phra-ratchathan chan-nork*) housed offices of administration. Second, the central court (*khet phra-ratchathan chan-klang*) served as the residence of the king. Third, the inner court (*khet phra-ratchathan chan-nai*) or *fai nai* was the most restricted area of the royal palace and served as private quarters that housed palace women. The inner court, where queens, princesses, daughters of aristocrats, and other female workers resided, was also known as the Forbidden City, from the fact that no men were allowed inside its walls with the exception of the King and princes below the age of 13 (Sasiwimon, 2004). While the outer court and central court were reserved spaces for men, the inner court was a space for aristocratic women and their retinues. The precise figure of the number of palace women (*nang nai)* who resided in this restricted area during the Fifth reign is unknown. It was estimated to be as high as 3,000 women during the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Loos, 2005, p 883). Loos used the term 'city' to describe the function of this restricted quarters of the palace. Given the size and the autonomy that these palace women had within the area, which will be elaborated later in this chapter, I could not agree more with Loos that the term 'inner city' is another appropriate term to describe the function of this restricted area of the inner quarters. Therefore, I will refer to the *fai nai* variously as the 'inner city' and 'inner court' throughout this chapter.

Inside the walls of the inner city, buildings and residences were grouped into three zones. Each zone comprised residences and buildings that housed different statuses of palace women. First, the nine northern buildings served as residences for

queens, major royal concubines, and daughters of the king and his brothers. For example, the *Tuek* residence (*phra tamnak tuek*) housed Queen consort Sawangwatthana; the *Daeng* residence (*phra tamnak daeng)* housed Queen Sukhumanmarasi; and the *Dara* residence (*tamnak phra ratchachaya chao dararatsami*) was where Queen Dararatsami resided. All nine residences in this northern part of the inner court were renovated in Western style during the reign of King Chulalongkorn with the influence of British and Italian architects (Wannaphon, 2009). Apart from the queens, the residences in this zone also housed Chulalongkorn's favourite concubines from important families such as, *Chaochom* Phae, On, Iem, Oep, Ap, and Euan, of the members of the Bunnag family. This signified the king's intention to maintain a healthy relationship with these powerful families by keeping their presence close to him.

The second zone of the inner court housed princesses and some of the royal concubines. Most of the palace women who resided in this area were of aristocratic backgrounds whose family positions were less significant than those who resided in the northern zone (Wannaphon, 2009). In addition, this zone also housed concubines of the previous King Mongkut, such as, *Chaochom* Wat, who served as Head of Personnel (*thao worachan*) of the inner city in the reign of King Chulalongkorn.

While the two above-mentioned zones of the inner city were reserved for wives of the king and other aristocratic women, the lower area of the private quarters housed the commoner women who worked as clerks, labourers, and female security guards or *khlon*. The long row of two-storey buildings (*teng*), located in the southern tip of the palace, served as a landmark of the commoners-only zone of the court of Siam. This was the area that offered the maximum freedom of movement to the palace women when compared to the other parts of the inner city. These women had the right to get married and to have families, who resided outside the inner city, but men were still strictly prohibited from entering this area without permission (Sasiwimon, 2004).

Domestic Lives in *Fai Nai* (Inner City): The Popular Image

Contemporary Thai popular history tends to reflect a stereotype of the inner court as merely a space of female domestic lives. The emphasis is placed on a harmonious image of the inner court, in which the space between genders is clearly divided. As previous mainstream publications (Krom Sinlapakon, 1979; Sasiwimon, 2004: Kukrit, 1962) portrayed the outer court as the male-dominated space and the centre of the administration, the inner court was a reserved domestic space for women and young children. In this domestic sphere, Siamese aristocratic women were restricted, not only from contact with the outside world but also from any male contacts other than the king. With such restricted access, the inner court is represented popular literature as a place of purity and harmony. *Si Phaendin* (Kukrit, 1962), a classic novel about an aristocratic woman who lived through the four reigns of Siam (Rama V to Rama VIII), is one of the popular novels that promotes this image of the life within the inner court. The novel depicts the lives of women in this domestic space to be equipped with skills and wisdom. The main character, Phloi, was a daughter of a civil servant who was sent to live in the inner city for etiquette training. Phloi grew up in a residence of a princess, whom she regarded as her god-mother, and only left the royal palace when she got married to an aristocrat man, Prem. Even as a housewife, she maintained her qualities of a proper palace woman and her loyalty to the royal family (Sasiwimon, 2004). The story of Phloi not only tries to demonstrate that the inner city was the best place for females to receive a good education at that time, but also gives the reader the impression that the proper upbringing of the palace women (*phuying chao-wang*) also widened the opportunity for them to meet aristocratic men for marriage.

Apart from *Si Phaendin*, which dominated the popular market of period romantic fiction when it was first published in the 1960s and 1970s, biographies of

consorts in the form of cremation volumes authored by Prince Damrong demonstrate their loyalty to the king and domestic roles (Lysa, 1998). The cremation volume of *Chaochom* Thapthim, a royal consort of King Chulalongkorn, illustrates her qualities of a trained palace woman who possessed domestic skills and etiquette. In this biography, Damrong also praised Thapthim's ability to successfully raise all her three children and to upheld Buddhist moral standards throughout her life (Damrong, 1938). This stereotype of the domestic lives of palace women, as seen in Thai popular fiction and Damrong's cremation volumes, served as part of the harmonious image of the inner court.

Figure 2.1 Leisure time in the inner city, c. 1890 (Thailand National Archives)

Besides the Victorian-period attitudes, including the fashion and lifestyles that were considered to be part of palace women's representations in the official historiography (figure 2.1), the Victorian-era gender-ideology is also a key concept that

supports the stereotype of the domestic lives within Siamese inner court seen in popular publications. While this concept has been debated in the context of European history (See Vickery, 2009), it is nevertheless central to understanding the mentioned stereotype of proper inner court women. Although English women's historian Amanda Vickery argued that the separation of the male public sphere and the private female sphere, "serves as a loose description of a very long-standing difference between the lives of women and men" (Vickery, 2009, pp 411), Siamese aristocrats were still largely influenced and fascinated by their perceptions of the Victorian period, especially during the reigns of King Chulalongkorn and King Vajiravudh. One of the most influential aspects of the gender ideology of the Victorian era in the English society of the late nineteenth century was "the concept that men and women should occupy separate spheres" (Gordon & Nair, 2003, p 1). It was this concept that bound women to the domestic affairs within the household, while men's sphere was in the public world that did not include women. The belief in separate gender domains of the Victorian era is reflected in the similar organisation of the Siamese court in the reign of King Chulalongkorn, in which women were confined within their private quarters or the most inner part of the palace (*fai nai*), and men belonged in the front quarters (*fai na*) where they were in contact with the outside world and public affairs. Although separate domains of men and women within the Siamese palace were not the outcome of the Victorian-era gender belief, and these spaces also proved to have existed long before Chulalongkorn's reign, the adoption of Victorian-period attitudes nonetheless contributed to intensifying popular stereotypes of palace women.

This chapter, nevertheless, aims to critique this stereotype of the inner court as solely a space for domestic lives. It will demonstrate that the organisation of the inner court underwent significant reform during the King Chulalongkorn period, in parallel to the public administration reform of the country. And as a consequence of this,

aristocratic women began to emerge in the unique setting of royal public sphere. While the inner court women did not have the freedom of movement outside the royal palace, nonetheless they enhanced their skills in various ways, including working in royal offices of the administration (*fai na*). Their roles as royal public workers will be considered in this chapter. In addition, the term royal public sphere will be used in order to describe the special setting that allowed aristocratic women to take on roles they had never previously occupied. In the following part, I will emphasise the reasons behind the internal reform of the inner city, which served as driving forces to the rise of aristocratic women in the royal setting of public sphere with their conduct of the royal public works (*ngan luang*).

Reasons for Internal Reform: The Expansion of *Fai Nai* (Inner City) and Western Criticisms of Siamese Women's Restricted Roles

The internal reform that took place in the inner court of Siam during the reign of Chulalongkorn was motivated by the increase in the number of palace women and rising criticisms of their restricted roles by Westerners. By the time of the reign of King Mongkut (r. 1851-1868), the number of women who resided within the Siamese palace in Bangkok had expanded because of the popular practice of polygynous politics that was used as a way to strengthen the monarch's centralised power. The polygynous practice of King Chulalongkorn was essential to his manipulation of power over the influential aristocratic families such as the Bunnags and the Amatyakuls (Phonsiri, 1997). Both families had been the most influential dynasties since the Ayutthaya period. Through the means of the traditional exchange of women or 'gifting', the Bangkok monarchs sought to establish political alliances (Phonsiri, 1997: Loos, 2005). It was in this period that women became part of the core function of 'Siam's political culture' by

acting as the mediators who linked their lineage kin to the monarchs (Loos, 2005). As a result, the Bangkok court expanded enormously between the reigns of King Mongkut (Rama IV) and Chulalongkorn (Rama V). The total numbers of Mongkut's 44 consorts and 43 daughters, and Chulalongkorn's 152 consorts and 44 daughters were recorded (Wannaphon, 2010). The statistics demonstrated that the political culture of polygyny had immensely expanded the size of the inner court of Bangkok in the nineteenth century.

While the number of kings' consorts increased in the reign of King Rama IV and V, the number of female clerks and labourers also rose. As the inner court was a restricted area reserved only for women, the recruitment of a female workforce was required by the expansion of its size. One major consort's retinue was estimated to include from 200 to 300 women, which included young women from noble families who learned the etiquette of the court and servants (Loos, 2005, p 883). Apart from each consort's retinue, general female labourers (*khlon*) also served as a majority group of palace women. Altogether, the number of women in these private quarters was estimated to be as high as 3,000 (Loos, 2005, p 883). These women of the working class are a group of palace women that have not been sufficiently represented in previous studies. Although the king intended to keep the inner court as a private quarters, the women who resided in this area were active within their own sphere. Indeed, these palace women had roles that contributed to the increase in their participation in the public sphere by the end of King Chulalongkorn's reign. The acting authority that Queen Saowapha had while serving as the king's regent in 1897 highlights the transition of elite women from the private space into the royal public sphere that was previously dominated by men.

As the size of the inner court was expanding, Westerners' negative criticisms about the Siamese monarchs' practice of polygamy also increased. Western accounts on

the Siamese King's 'harem', such as by Leonowens (1870, 1873), initially had minimal impact on the monarch's political culture. Instead, the monarchs continued with the polygynous practice until the reign of King Vajiravudh (Rama VI) in 1910, when the inner court began to decline. Nevertheless, Western criticisms served as an impetus for Siamese monarchs to reform representations of these women by bringing them out into the public sphere. Western criticisms of the inferior status of Siamese women became the monarch's concern by the end of the nineteenth century. The inferior status of Siamese women is seen in accounts by Western visitors, in particular the missionaries. The accounts by Anna Leonowens, who served as the governess at the Siamese court from 1862 to 1868, although fictionalised, seem to be the most popular Western criticisms of the Siamese palace women. Her two major works, *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* (1870) and *Romance of the Harem* (1873), portrayed the brutality of the treatment of women as well as slavery within Siam. While Leonowens' accounts became more popular in the Western world, King Chulalongkorn responded to these types of critiques with an internal reform of the inner city in order to improve the image of Siamese palace women. The king employed high-ranking palace women to be in charge of the administration of the palace in order to demonstrate to the West that Siamese women were equal subjects to men. As the result of this internal reform, the roles and class structure of the palace women became more organised, as it will be discussed in the following part of this chapter.

Phuying chao-wang (Palace Women): Class and Roles

> Palace women can be classified into three class categories. The simplest way of calling them can be: the high class (*chan-sung*), middle class (*chan-klang*), and low class (*chan-tam*). Each of these classes had different statuses and opportunities to education and etiquette training (Prince Damrong, 1938, p 14).

Although the inner court served as a restricted zone for women where men were not allowed, it was a shared area between young boys and girls of the elite class. Princes, princesses, and children of aristocrats attended their first schooling in this part of the royal palace. The employment of women missionaries as teachers in the inner court had begun in the reign of King Mongkut, when coeducation was offered (Waruni, 1981). This evidence shows that, although the inner court was seen mainly as a reserved space for women, it nonetheless also played a significant role in the raising of the children of the elite class. While boys had to leave the inner court after they turned 13 years of age, girls continued to reside within this restricted zone, and were enrolled in different residences for training as ladies-in-waiting, and they would ultimately become adult *phuying chao wang* (palace women) who took up different roles within the inner city. Although the inner city was not a shared space for adult men and women, it was a common area for women of different classes and family backgrounds. In the opening statement above, Prince Damrong indicates that there were three major classes of inner court women. The first class was the most prestigious class of queens, royal consorts, concubines, and princesses who were born and raised within the inner court. The second class included the aristocratic women or daughters of wealthy non-noble families who were not born in the palace but had established family connections with the royal palace. These middle-class women enrolled in residences within the inner city as ladies-in-

waiting (*kha-luang*). The lowest class of palace women was the women of commoner backgrounds who performed labouring tasks in the inner city. These women either worked as security guards or as general labourers at different residences. This lowest class of palace women was also known as *khlon*, and the same term was used to name the security department of the inner city founded in the early 1900s (Damrong, 1938). Before exploring in more detail the roles of each of the above classes, it is necessary to understand the different titles and terms (figure 2.2) used in defining these inner city women.

Defining Palace Women (*phuying chao-wang*)

1. Wives of the kings	*Phra mahesi*	Queen Consort (chief queens)
	Phra akkharachaya	Royal Consort
	Chaochom	Royal Concubine
2. Daughters of the kings	*Phra ratchathida*	Her Royal Highness Princess
3. Daughters of princes	*Momchao-ying*	Her Serene Highness Princess
3. Royal Servants	*Kha-luang*	Ladies-in-waiting
	Khlon	Guardswomen, female labourers

Figure 2.2 Titles of Women of the Inner Court

As the inner city was comprised of women of all three classes, different titles gave specific social status and expected roles. Among the women of the inner city, the most powerful were the wives of the king. There is no absolute certainty about the

numbers of queens, concubines, and other consorts of either King Mongkut (Rama IV) or King Chulalongkorn (Rama V). The most detailed records show that Mongkut had approximately 44 wives during his reign, while Chulalongkorn's number of wives was as high as 152 (Wannaphon, 2009, p 286-315). Three major titles were employed to classify different rankings of the king's wives. First, *phra mahesi* was the title equivalent to the queen consort, given to the wives who were the daughters of the previous king. Four queen consorts were presented in the reign of King Chulalongkorn. They were Sunantha (born 1860, died 1880), Sukhumanmarasi (born 1861, died 1927), Sawangwatthana (born 1862, died 1955), and Saowapha (born 1863, died 1919), all of whom were daughters of King Mongkut and were each granted the title of *phra mahesi* by Chulalongkorn (Wannaphon, 2009, p 286-315). With the exception of Queen Sunantha, who passed away in a tragic accident at Bang Pa-in in 1880, the queen consorts of Chulalongkorn played most significant roles in the inner city. For example, Queen Saowapha served as the regent of court administration during Chulalongkorn's visit to Europe in 1897, and Queen Sukhumanmarasi was the head of the court's kitchen and often was in charge of organising formal receptions and royal banquets. The second group of consorts was called *phra akkharachaya.* They were still regarded as queens but with lower rank than the previous group, whose father was King Mongkut. These wives of the king held aristocratic titles as daughters of princes or the equivalent even before their marriages. For example, *phra akkharachaya* Saowapaknarirat (born 1854, died 1887) was the daughter of Prince Ladawan, a son of King Rama III. However, one exception was the case of Princess Dararatsami (born 1873, died 1933), daughter of *Chao* Inthawitchayanon, the ruler of Chiangmai. Given that Chiangmai was seen as Siam's vassal state, the king had regarded *Chao* Inthawitchayanon as part of the kin in this polygynous politics and also granted the title of *phra akkharachaya* to Dararatsami as an equivalent to other daughters of Siamese princes. The third category of the wives

of the king was the *chaochom* or royal concubines. This title was given to consorts from any social backgrounds. The concubines with the title of *chaochom* were the largest group of the king's wives. The number of Chulalongkorn's concubines with this title was estimated to be as high as 143 (Wannaphon, 2009, p 31). Some of the concubines of King Mongkut also held important positions in the inner city as senior *chaochom* in the reign of King Chulalongkorn. For example, *Chaochom* Wat (born 1841, died 1939) occupied the position of the chief of concubines and female royal servants (*thao worachan*) from 1886 to 1927 (Phitthayalap Phruetthiyakon, 1967). Many other *chaochom* were also renowned for their specific skills, such as *Chaochom* Sadap (born 1890, died 1983) who was a vocalist of the royal music band (anon., 1983).

Apart from the wives of the king, the second generation of palace women, which included daughters of the king with the title *phra ratchathida*, also played major roles within the inner city. The number of the princesses of this title was 43 in the reign of King Mongkut and 44 in the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Wannaphon, 2009, p 318-338). Similar to what happened to *chaochom,* some of the senior daughters of Mongkut who lived through the reign of Chulalongkorn also took important positions in the administration of the inner city. For example, Princess Naphaphonprapha (born 1864, died 1958) served as the General Secretary of the Inner City (*Somdet Athibodi*) (Phunphitsamai, 1990). Although the number of *chaochom* and *phra ratchathida* dramatically declined in the reign of King Vajiravudh, Princess Walai-alongkon (born 1884, died 1938), a daughter of King Chulalongkorn and Queen Sawangwatthana, still played a role as a liaison for foreign monarchs and guests in formal receptions. Other princesses, with the rank of *momchao-ying* (daughters of princes), also worked as teachers in the first female school, Sunanthalai Girl's School, founded within the inner city in the late nineteenth century (Phunphitsamai, 1990).

Another title of the women of the inner city was *kha-luang* (ladies-in-waiting). These women served in residences of the king's consorts and princesses. The ladies-in-waiting in the inner court of Siam took advantage of "the prestige of palace training" while also seeking ways to help "their fathers in obtaining noble ranks" (Jones, 1971, p 138). By gaining such skills of the palace women and expanding political networks for their families, these ladies-in-waiting had a better opportunity to marry men of the noble class. Others could also reside within the inner court and became ladies-in-waiting in different residences.

Figure 2.3 *Khlon* or guardswomen during King Mongkut's reign (Sarakadee, 2015)

The last and lowest title of palace women to be discussed here is *khlon* (figure 2.3). Initially, this was the title of the commoner women who worked in the inner city, which included various roles from clerks, the security guards, to general labourers. With the growth in the size of the inner city during the reign of King Chulalongkorn, *khlon* became the name of the newly established department of *krom khlon* (Female Police Department of the Inner City) in the 1890s, which took responsibility for the safety and

order of the inner city (*Krommamuen* Phitthayalap Phruetthiyakon, 1967, p 30). The title of *khlon,* by the end of nineteenth century Siam, referred to the female police *(polit)* who guarded the palace gates, leading to the inner court. Her Serene Highness Princess (*momchao-ying*) Phunphitsamai recorded,

> Narrow buildings and streets built with stones resemble the city of Venice…there were also the female police [*polit*], who were known as *khlon,* stationed in this city-like part of the palace (Phunphitsamai, 1990, p 218).

In her memoir, the princess used the English word 'police' [*polit*] to describe the guardswomen of the inner city, as they were responsible for the safety of palace women and also carried out orders and regulations. In addition to their tasks within the palace, *khlon* women were also allowed to get married and reside outside the palace walls with their families. In other words, these women could be seen as the early generation of female government servants, in which they could commute between the palace and outside, unlike the king's consorts and princesses, who had restricted access to the outside world from this forbidden city.

High-class Palace Women (chan sung)

The most powerful roles of the inner city belonged the highest class of palace women, which included the queen consorts and royal consorts (both ranks of *phra mahesi* and *phra akkharachaya*), the aristocratic concubines (*chaochom*), and princesses (*phra ratchathida*). According to Prince Damrong, these women performed different tasks within the inner city, which can be listed in four major categories of work. First, they worked as teachers for younger palace women. Princess Phunphitsamai (born 1895, died 1990), daughter of Prince Damrong, recorded in her memoirs that the inner city was the first "college" for her (Phunphitsamai, 1990, p 213). Her first teacher who

taught her domestic skills (*wicha kunlasatri*) was Her Royal Highness Princess Niphanopphadon (born 1885, died 1935), one of Chulalongkorn's favourite daughters (Phunphitsamai, 1990). Queen Consort Sukhumanmarasi was also known for her poetic skills. Her skills were passed on to many of the younger learners who resided at her residence, such as Princess Chongchithanom (born 1886, died 1978), the oldest daughter of Prince Damrong, who later became a renowned female writer. The second common role for high-class palace women was administration jobs in the king's office, where they had the chance to familiarise themselves with public roles in the male quarters (*fai na*). Many of the literate princesses and consorts served as administration clerks. For example, both Princess Niphanopphadon, and Queen Sukhumanmarasi worked closely in the office with Queen Saowapha when she was serving as the king's regent in 1897 (Thongthong, 1989). Damrong stated that most of palace women who took this administrative role were the older ones with work experience, rather than the younger ones (Damrong, 1938, p 19). Third, high-class palace women also served as personal assistants to the king. Different tasks related to the king's personal routine were available for the younger palace women, usually young consorts, such as looking after his clothing and accoutrements and meals. These younger consorts were often supervised by older and higher-ranking consorts of the king. For example, *Chaochom* Wat supervised the king's change of clothes and Royal Consort Saisawaliphirom was the head of the kitchen of King Chulalongkorn (Chongchitthanom, 2007). The fourth common role of the high-class palace women was that of court entertainers. Dance, music, and acting were seen as the requisite skills of high-class palace women. *Chaochom* Sadap entered the palace at the age of eleven as a lady-in-waiting and became the lead vocalist of the royal band. Her voice impressed Chulalongkorn and that led Sadap the way to earn the title of *chaochom* in 1906 (anon., 1983). Many dancers also used their skills to impress the king and earn the title of *chaochom* as well, such as

Chaochom Yam and *Chaochom* Lukchan. Both were dancers of the inner court's plays (*lakhon nai*), which were performed only by women of the inner city as part of the traditional rituals rather than for entertainment (Damrong, 1938).

All four roles of high-class palace women listed by Prince Damrong underline the influence these women had on the male monarchs as well as highlighting their superior position to the lower ranks of palace women. This perspective challenges the Western idea in popular accounts of the Siamese 'harem' as a place where women were oppressed and uneducated. In fact, these women held significant autonomy, especially those who assisted in the King's office during Queen Saowapha's regency, which will be explored in the latter part of this chapter.

Middle-class Palace Women (chan-klang)

The middle-class women included daughters of aristocrats or wealthy non-nobility who were not necessarily born within the inner city (*kha-luang*), who often served as ladies-in-waiting. As mentioned in the earlier part of this chapter, because the inner city served as the first school for children of the elite class, aristocratic parents often sought ways through family connections to send their daughters into the palace for the best available education at the time. These women often started their life in the palace as apprentices at residences of the senior princesses and consorts. The roles of the ladies-in-waiting were dependent on the skills they obtained during their time in these residences. For example, women who resided at the residence of Royal Consort Saisawaliphirom often helped in the king's dining room, as the queen was the head of the kitchen at the time (Sansani, 2008). In the memoirs of Her Serene Highness Princess Chongchitthanom, she illustrated her early career as a palace woman. Chongchitthanom entered the palace as a lady-in-waiting at Queen Sukhumanmarasi's residence at the age of eight. Because of the queen's role in the king's office, Chongchitthanom became a

full-time clerk at the age of 15. She recorded in her memoirs, "In 1901, my father informed the king of his will to put me to work at the king's office. The king then spoke to me in person that *your father wants you to be an office clerk*"(Chongchitthanom, 2007, p 27, emphasis in original). This evidence demonstrates that the role of the middle-class palace women depended on the family connections they had with the royal court. In this case, Chongchitthanom was a daughter of Prince Damrong, one of King Chulalongkorn's favourite brothers, who had one of the most influential roles in his reign. While some of these students remained within the inner city throughout their lives, many of these aristocratic women were allowed to quit their positions and leave the palace when they got married.

Another group of middle-class palace women were those of the slightly lower status to the mentioned ladies-in-waiting. These women were commoners who had already been working within the inner city, but were able to enhance their status through promotion to achieve positions such as chief of the *khlon* (Female Police) or headmistresses of the royal residences. These women were the senior women with experience in working within the inner city. This group of women also showed the social dynamic of class between the low and the middle classes in the inner city. The roles and class of women within the inner city was not necessarily determined by birth. Even the low-class women had the ability to move up the social hierarchy of the inner city based on their experience and merit.

Low-class Palace Women (chan-tam)

The lowest class of palace women was the *khlon*. As explained earlier, *khlon* were the labourers of the inner city. They were sometimes employed as servants at different residences of the royal consorts but one of the major jobs of these women was to guard the palace gates and act as the inner court police. These female guards became

even more essential to the regulation of the palace when Saowapha served as state regent. As a result, a reform was carried out to regulate these women and organise them into the newly established Female Police Department (*Krom Khlon*, C. 1890), with Princess Naphaphonprapha as the head of the department, in order to increase regulation of the inner city. One of the major concerns among palace women was gambling, and evidence showed that *khlon* took a role in prohibiting this activity in the inner court (*Krommamuen* Phitthayalap Phruetthiyakon, 1967). Moreover, *khlon* also guarded male access to the inner city. As men, except for the king and princes under the age of 13, were generally not allowed in the inner city without permission, these female police strictly guarded the palace gates. Male doctors or any men who had the permission to enter the area for a specific purpose had to be escorted by *khlon* (Sasiwimon, 2004, p 6).

Prince Damrong recorded that the conscription of *khlon* had been modernised with open recruitment in the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Damrong, 1938, p 38). This granted commoner women of Bangkok access to the royal palace and opportunities to enhance their social position within the inner city. As previously discussed, women who worked as *khlon* could move up in status to become chiefs and women who worked as domestic servants could get promoted to become the headmistresses of the residences.

The New Administration of the Inner Court: Rules and Regulations

In response to a growing number of cases of transgression of rules, a new order was launched in the inner city. The internal reform of the inner city during Chulalongkorn's reign aimed to tighten the rules and regulations of palace women. This directly impacted the structure of the administration of the inner city, which became more organised than before. This part of the chapter explores the role of the Female

Police Department of the Inner City (*Krom Khlon*), and the key administrative titles and positions of palace women as part of the inner city's internal reform.

One of the monarch's concerns about palace women was adultery. As a result, male access to the inner court was heavily restricted, as previously mentioned. Nonetheless, one of the most scandalous adultery cases was committed between a Buddhist monk, To, and Princess Yingyaowalak (born 1852, died 1886) (Figure 2.4), a daughter of King Mongkut. Although men were forbidden from the inner quarters, Buddhist monks were occasionally allowed to enter the Inner City to perform religious rituals. After the first encounter between To and the princess while he was still a monk, he continued to sneak into the inner city in disguise as a female to have an unsanctioned affair with the princess, until she became pregnant. The truth was revealed only when the princess gave birth to the baby. When the news reached the King, capital punishment was immediately ordered to both the princess and the monk (Phonsiri, 1997, p 17). While To was executed later on, the punishment for the princess was reduced to the annulment of her royal title and she was imprisoned until she passed away in 1886 (Phonsiri, 1997).

Figure 2.4 Princess Yingyaowalak (Anake, 1999)

Another trace of possible adultery occurred in 1906. One of Chulalongkorn's memorandums to Princess Naphaphonprapha demonstrated the evidence of an unknown unwanted child. The two-month-old male infant was found dead in the palace. The King wrote to Princess Naphaphonprapha with concern, "It is very unusual if the real mother would have abandoned her child like that. The person who did this must not be one of the *phudi*" (Chulalongkorn, 1954). The word *phudi* in this letter refers to the palace women of aristocratic and good upbringing and background. The king further mentioned that the child might have belonged to *khlon* because he believed that elite palace women would not commit such an action (Phonsiri, 1997). Although the result of the investigation is unknown, this case serves as evidence that the inner city was not an ethically flawless place as it has been represented in popular Thai literature. The death of the unwanted infant could have been connected to another unknown case of adultery within the palace that could have been committed either by the low-class women (*khlon*) or the aristocratic women (*phudi*) of the Siamese court.

In addition to heterosexual crime, homosexuality among the palace women was also strictly prohibited. Evidence of homosexual practice (*len phuean*) within the inner court dates back to the reign of King Nangklao, Rama III (1824-1851), as in the poem about the case of *mom* Sut and *mom* Kham (Phonsiri, 1997, p 54). Both were aristocratic women who were known for their homosexuality. Although there was no evidence that these two women were punished, *len pheuan* became was a strictly prohibited act in the reigns of King Mongkut and King Chulalongkorn as the inner court had expanded. In this period, palace women who were involved in same-sex *len pheuan* relationships would be tattooed on their foreheads and expelled from the inner city. The tattoo also served as a permanent ban upon these women to prohibit them from re-entering the palace (Phonsiri, 1997).

As Thai literary sources rarely mention cases in the royal palace where rules were broken, the desire to search for a more realistic picture of the place is rather restricted by the scarceness of the historical evidence. Nevertheless, the existence of an inner court prison and *khlon* or 'polit' (police) serves as evidence that rules were broken and charges were carried out in this restricted area. In addition to the above-mentioned misbehaviours, another inappropriate activity, which seemed to be common among palace women (of the lower ranks), was gambling. *Chaochom* Wat, recorded that the prohibition against gambling was tightened especially in the late 1890s, when Queen Saowapha served as the King's regent (*Krommamuen* Phitthayalap Phruetthiyakon, 1967, p 30). Princess Naphaphonprapha, who headed the Female Police Department, also earned the reputation of a strict rule keeper during this particular time. Her role will be the focus of the following part on the inner city's regulations and the structure of administration.

Female Police Department of the Inner City: *Khlon*

Figure 2.5 Princess Naphaphonprapha, General Secretary of the Inner City (*Somdet Athibodi*) and Head of the Female Police Department from 1897 to 1932 (Baanmaha, 2009)

One of the most significant changes in the administration of the inner city was the formation of the Female Police Department (*krom khlon*). The *khlon*, referred to the general female labourers who worked in the inner quarters from the early Bangkok period, but they were not organised into a department until the reign of King Chulalongkorn. Together with the newly founded department, a new position of General Secretary *(Somdet Athibodi*) was also created, which was granted to Princess Naphaphonprapha (figure 2.5), who served in this position until 1932. The General Secretary became the most important administrative position of the inner city, which reported directly to the king instead of the Ministry of Interior (*krom wang*), which resulted in the high level of power the princess had over the administration. Moreover, the department was also responsible for the general security of the inner court, including the palace's gates and general access into the inner city. The employment of *khlon* as female police also became more systematic as their roles became important to the administration of the inner city. It was in this period that rules became more strict for the palace women. Gambling, for example, was one of the activities that became strictly prohibited by the department that reported directly to the monarch (Krommamuenphitthayalap-Phruetthiyakon, 1967). In addition, the *khlon* guardswomen also highlight the dynamic of the inner court women outside the palace in the urban Bangkok society. As these women were allowed to have families outside the palace and commuted freely to and from the inner city, they represented themselves as palace employees. Hence, the inner city offered the commoner women a space to perform work outside their domestic sphere of the family households. This stimulated the commoner women of urban Bangkok to see themselves in the public sphere as they became employees of the inner city.

Key Titles and Positions of the Inner City Administration

Prior to 1897, the inner court of Siam followed the traditional pattern that had been laid down since the Ayutthaya period. The important titles of the female administrators, such as Head of Personnel (*thao worachan*), Storage Manager (*thao songkandan*), Head of Security/palace's key holder (*thao sisatcha*), and Senior Female Escort (*nang-thaokae*) existed from the Ayutthaya period to the early reign of King Rama the Fifth of Bangkok (Sara, 2008, p 104-107). It was only in 1897, that these key titles, adopted from the Ayutthaya period, were reorganised within the new administrative reform of the inner city.

While many of the above-mentioned titles were reduced in their power, *thao worachan* still maintained a role within the inner city in the Bangkok period and became more influential in the administration of the inner court during Queen Saowapha's regency in 1897. Traditionally, the position was the highest in the inner court. *Thao worachan* became the equivalent of the head of personnel (palace women) in the reign of King Chulalongkorn. As this was a traditional position, the person who held this title was supposed to be a senior and well-respected woman among the consorts and princesses. The title was granted to *Chaochom* Wat (born 1841, died 1939), a royal consort of King Mongkut, in 1886 when she was 45 years old (*Krommamuen* Phitthayalap Phruetthiyakon, 1967). The task of *thao worachan* involved the general welfare and logistics of consorts and concubines of all rankings. The general wellbeing of the palace women was the major concern of the head of personnel, especially with the arrangements for court doctors and their access in and out of the inner city. Moreover, the logistics of these palace women were also organised by *thao worachan*. She had to arrange for *nang-thaokae* (senior female escort) to escort the consorts and princesses when they had to travel outside the inner city, as contact with men was strictly prohibited (*Krommamuen* Phitthayalap Phruetthiyakon, 1967, p 19). This traditional

position went hand-in-hand with the newly appointed position of *Somdet Athibodi* (General Secretary) of the inner city. Although the General Secretary tended to have more administrative power than the *thao warachan*, the latter had more contact with the palace women as she had to deal with their personal matters. In other words, the modernisation of the administrative reform of the inner city improved its organisation but it did not completely change traditional practices. The system of seniority still served as the core structuring principle of the inner city. Nevertheless, this reform granted the aristocratic women the mobility to enter the male-dominated public sphere. They began to learn skills and enjoy power that did not previously exist.

Aristocratic Women in Action: The Emergence of Siamese Women in the Public Sphere

Darani Sihathai analysed in her thesis that during Saowapha's regency "the queen had to represent the power of the king for the governing of the population and the Kingdom of Siam, as well as being part of the *siwilai* image for the progress of the nation" (Darani, 2008, p 36). From this statement, Darani meant to convey the message that although Queen Saowapha took such a significant role as the king's regent, her power was still limited under the king's shadow and his aim to promote *siwilai*, which was sometimes equivalent to the English term 'progress' as well as 'civilised'. The promotion of the ideas of 'civilisation' and 'progress' served as one of the push factors to the appointment of Saowapha as the king's regent in 1897. In order to counter Western criticisms on the king's practice of polygyny and oppression of women, Queen Saowapha became the most suitable candidate for his regency. As Saowapha had the king's acting authority, the king hoped that Siam's status would be improved in outsiders' eyes. As a consequence, the queen crossed over to the royal public male

sphere (*fai na*) from the private domestic sphere of women (*fai nai*) for the first time. Foreign media published images of King Chulalongkorn and Queen Saowapha together, i.e. in *Le Petit Parisien* (Darani, 2008, p 159). This was a way to respond to Western criticisms. Although the promotion of Saowapha's role as the king's regent in the royal public sphere was still subjected to his majesty's authority, Saowapha stimulated and enhanced the autonomy of the inner city during her regency more than any Siamese woman had done before. Queen Saowapha and Princess Naphaphonprapha are two palace women who made their first appearances in the public sphere as a consequence of the internal reforms of the inner city.

The reformed administration of the inner city demonstrates the autonomy that palace women had in governing themselves under the great role model of Queen Saowapha. Unlike in the popular image, where palace women were seen as subjects of male representations, the women's direct involvement at the administrative level serves as evidence that palace women were more active in their own space than mainstream Thai literary and historical works have perceived. The administration of the inner court enjoyed a great level of autonomy, especially during Chulalongkorn's visit to Europe. Queen Saowapha, who served as the king's regent from April to December 1897, carried out a major reform in the administration of the inner city (Darani, 2008). During Saowapha's regency, the queen took charge in major administrative roles including chairing state meetings (with the all-male meeting board) (figure 2.6); approving official announcements: and keeping good international relations by hosting noble visitors from France, Britain, Japan, and Germany.

Figure 2.6 Queen Saowapha chairing state meetings in 1897 (Reurnthai, 2006)

In addition to the regency roles, Saowapha's support for female education was also a significant contribution to the enhanced position of women in the public sphere (Details of Saowapha's role in developing female education are discussed in chapter III, *Early Female Education in Siam 1870-1910*). While King Chulalongkorn opposed education for girls, Saowapha pushed to advance women's skills within the inner city. With the queen's initiative, Sunanthalai Girl's School and Phadungkan Nursing School were founded in 1892 and 1896, respectively (Darani, 2008). Sunanthalai Girl's School was the first royal-sponsored school that directly promoted skills for younger generations of aristocratic women. Aristocratic girls previously received their skills and education from the elder palace women in different residences. With the founding of Sunanthalai within the inner city, they were obliged to move into the school residence and live on full board. In this school, girls received training in English language and the Victorian-era influenced sports, as Princess Chongchitthanom reports,

> At lunch… each of the students of Sunanthalai who could speak sufficient English would take turns to have lunch with the English missionary teacher [*khru maem*] in order to practise English table manners and English speaking skills. Classes finished at 4 o' clock in the afternoon, when students and teachers played sports in the yard. The

games played were croquet, badminton, cricket, and tennis (Chongchitthanom, 2007, p 24).

Western Missionary women were employed as teachers at the beginning of the school's opening but later were replaced by Japanese teachers as the queen aimed to minimise Christian influence in girls' education (Anon., 2010). As a result of Queen Saowapha's support for female education, aristocratic Siamese women became more equipped with skills that were essential for their enhanced roles in the public sphere.

Apart from Queen Saowapha, Princess Naphaphonprapha was another remarkable woman who marked her role in the public sphere through her title as *Somdet Athibodi* (General Secretary of the inner city). The collected correspondence between King Chulalongkorn and Princess Naphaphonprapha demonstrates the role and engagement of the princess in the public sphere. Apart from heading the Female Police Department (*krom khlon*) as previously discussed, Naphaphonprapha worked closely with King Chulalongkorn and took direct instructions from him. The General Secretary's responsibility went beyond the wellbeing of palace women. Naphaphonprapha also had to control the public image of the inner city. A letter from the king to Naphaphonprapha on 8 April 1908 requested the General Secretary to denounce the rumour about spirit-revealed remedy for curing any diseases which commoners believed to have spread from the palace. The king expressed his concern about this fraud, published in the newspaper *Chin-no siam worasap*, as it claimed to have originated in the palace (Chulalongkorn, 1954, p 52). This evidence demonstrates that Naphaphonprapha's role went beyond the walls of the inner city. She was also acting upon the king's request to publicly denounce the rumour about the inner city that affected the lives of commoners.

Another important responsibility that Naphaphonprapha had as the General Secretary of the Inner City was to organise royal ceremonies and formal receptions for foreign guests. Her job involved the organisation of seating charts, procedures, and security of these events (Chulalongkorn, 1954). In addition to event organisation, Naphaphonprapha's priority was to maintain an appropriate image of palace women, especially when there were foreign visitors. During the visit of the Prussian Duke of Brunswick, King Chulalongkorn instructed Princess Naphaphonprapha in a letter of 21 December 1909 to control the movement of palace women (Chulalongkorn, 1954, p 66). Following the king's order, Naphaphonprapha issued a letter of warning on 23 January 1909 to control the appearances of palace women during the formal reception as the following,

> It is not that women cannot be seen by foreigners [*farang*]. Palace women [*chao-wang*] can see the foreign monarchs but should always keep good manners and must not be intrusive (Chulalongkorn, 1954, p 67-68).

Maintaining the appropriate image of the inner court women was one of King Chulalongkorn's top concerns. By giving Naphaphonprapha the title of General Secretary of the inner city, the king demonstrated a great level of trust in her. As a result of Naphaphonprapha's respectable reputation, she kept her title from 1897 to the dissolution of the inner court in 1932 as a consequence of the revolution.

These examples of the emerging royal public roles of aristocratic women of Chulalongkorn's reign demonstrate that the internal reform of the inner city ultimately had a major impact on women's participation in the male dominated royal public sphere.

Conclusion

Representations of the inner court and the palace women of Siam during the reign of King Chulalongkorn in Thai official history as a civilised harmonious place of domestic lives is challenged by the historical evidence of the internal reforms that were carried out and permitted women to emerge more in the public sphere. This chapter has demonstrated that due to the growing number of palace women in the inner city and Western criticisms on the inferior status of Siamese women, King Chulalongkorn felt the need to reform the inner court's organisation and also the roles of palace women. Access to education and the increase in the roles of palace women challenged Western criticism of the inner city as a 'harem' where women were oppressed and uneducated. Instead, palace women became more skilled and active in the administration in the reign of King Chulalongkorn as the result of his internal reform of the inner city.

During the era of the absolute monarchy, the inner city possessed a significant level of autonomy. The administration of the inner city was reformed and modernised in the late nineteenth century. Aristocratic women were granted specific roles in the administration, which were previously reserved only for men. The enhanced roles of women within the inner court were the result of the internal reform Chulalongkorn carried out in parallel to state reform that focused on centralisation and the idea of *siwilai*, both of which were seen as the means to survive colonialism. Nevertheless, this development in women's position and the newly established female education were the foundation of the emerging public roles of women in the later period, which will be the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter III

Early Female Education in Siam: 1870-1910

Introduction

This chapter will study the impact of the modernisation of education on women from 1870 to 1910, which will concentrate on both the publicly funded form of female schools and the private missionary schools. The reforms in the administration of the *fai nai* (the inner court) under King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) studied in chapter II equipped many royal elite women with skills and a level of education never previously enjoyed by Siamese women. As a consequence, Queen Saowapha took initiatives to advance the place of women in the wider society in the field of public education. Nevertheless, this royal elite female agency in the field of public education faced two sets of tensions, namely were, first, resistance from Chulalongkorn to female education, and second, competition from foreign missionaries. This chapter aims to study the historical development of female education in the frame of class conflict between female elites of the early modern period of Siam as a parallel development to the rising literacy levels in Siamese society.

In order to study the development of female education in the period between 1870 and 1910, as a foundation to the emergence of women in the public sphere, this chapter is structured as follows. The education of women in the pre-modern era will first be explored in order to give an overview of traditional education before the period of modernisation.

First steps in this modernisation were carried out mainly by Queen Saowapha, who took initiatives to seek to advance the place of women in the wider society through education by supporting the founding of Sunanthalai Girls' School in 1892. Then, this chapter will address the establishment of the missionary-run girls' school, Kunlasatri Wang Lang (1874), as the major rival school to Queen Saowapha's sponsored Sunanthalai School. This missionary-run school also served a key factor in the rise of commoner elite women, which will be focused on in the final part of this chapter as part of the class-conflict between different groups of literate women of Siam in the pre-revolutionary years of the late 1920s.

Female Education in Siam: the Pre-modern Era

While the education of women will be the focus of this chapter, it is important to understand the general perception Siamese society has of female education. According to the traditional Siamese interpretation of Buddhist values, women's position had been always subordinated to men, as they were represented as symbols of temptation and sensuality in the way of men's practice to ultimately attain *nirvana* (Waruni, 1981). As a consequence, women are prohibited from direct contact with Buddhist monks and have limited roles in monasteries. Therefore, monastery education was an unavailable option for women in the pre-modern era, although it was the most common place for literacy teaching, but only for boys. For villagers outside the urban areas, literacy was seen as unnecessary for women because of their lifestyles that were based on agriculture, and only labour was a required skill for them. Nonetheless, in the urban areas, literacy slowly became a symbol of class status and an opportunity for women at the turn of the twentieth century to enhance their social positions, i.e. through marriages to upper class men who sought to marry

literate women. As a result, many urban middle-class families chose to train their daughters in their homes for basic literacy and domestic skills in the pre-modern era.

In the pre-modern era, education in Siam was only available in Buddhist monasteries (*wat*), the palace (*wang*), and well-off domestic households (*ban*) (Sukanya, 2005). With the exception of the elite class, temples were the first schools for boys from the Ayutthaya period. The monks' task was not only the teaching of Buddhist principles to boys but also to prepare them with literacy skills. While a commoner boy started to learn how to read and write at a temple, usually at the age of eight, princes, princesses, and children of the aristocrats had their coeducation within the inner court of the royal palace or *fai nai* from the age of three (Waruni, 1981). Given that there was no barrier between boys' and girls' education within the inner court, aristocratic girls could obtain the same education as boys until they reached their teenage years, when girls were to receive the training of domestic skills from older princesses according to the court culture. This evidence highlights the distinct position of the aristocratic class from commoners in urban Bangkok and nearby cities in central Siam in the pre-modern period.

Besides the three above-mentioned places where Siamese received their education, the first school made a brief appearance in Siam in the Ayutthaya period with the arrival of Catholic missionaries. This first Western form of education Siam was the work of the M.E.P. (Mission Etrangère de Paris) during the reign of King Narai of Ayutthaya (born 1633, died 1688). The General College of the M.E.P. was founded in 1663 with the support from the king. Locals were also encouraged to study in this monastery/college as well. Ten out of thirteen students were Thai students that King Narai had sponsored to study at this college. With the reputation of Ayutthaya as a free city, where anyone of any nationality was welcomed to come for settlement, the number of students at the General College had

increased to approximately 100 in 1672 (Thanaphon, 2005). However, most students were Catholics who had migrated from other cities in the region and the number of Siamese remained low. Nevertheless, when Ayutthaya fell into the period of political chaos after the end of King Narai's reign in 1688, the French Catholic missionaries were expelled from Ayutthaya and took away with them the Western educational system that they had established (Wutthichai, 1973).

The missionaries only returned to Siam again in the reign of King Rama III. In 1828, Protestant missionaries began to arrive in Siam. The first Protestant missionaries were Dr. Carl Augustus Gutzlaff (German) and Rev. Jacobs Tomlin (English). The American missionaries i.e. A.B.C.F.M. (American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions) and American Presbyterians arrived later, in 1833. The Protestant mission to educate the local population started in 1836 at the initiative of Mrs. Dan Bradley of A.B.C.F.M. The intention was to offer education for both boys and girls (Thanaphon, 2005). By the reign of King Mongkut (1851-1868), the palace had already employed American female missionaries to teach princes and princesses within the inner court. This highlights the beginning of the modernisation process of education in Siam where literacy would gradually became more popular among Siamese women, particularly in the urban areas.

Education for Aristocratic Women: *Fai Nai* (Inner City)

"The inner court was serving as a college for young women where all kinds of skills were taught from literacy to fashion", said Princess Phunphitsamai Diskul (born 1895, died 1990) (Phunphitsamai, 1990, p 212). Princess Phunphitsamai was a daughter of one of the most influential figures in Thai history, Prince Damrong. Her father's ideas are reflected in her journalist work that will be explored in a later chapter of this thesis. Born in

1895, the princess spent her childhood growing up in the residences within the inner court. Within these private quarters, daughters of high-ranking aristocrats were sent to royal residences of queens and royal consorts (*chaochom)* to obtain skills ranging from basic literacy to specialised domestic skills. Princess Phunphitsamai had lost her mother at a very young age and her father did as other aristocrats did at the time. He decided to send the princess to the inner court. The education within the inner court was similar to education offered at early female schools in Siam in the 1900s. Older princesses were teachers of the younger ones and occasionally foreign missionaries were also hired on contracts to teach English within this restricted zone of the palace. Princess Phunphitsamai recorded that she received her education from several teachers. She learned French and English from foreign teachers, learned Thai from Princess Witthayaprichamat, and was trained for domestic skills, which were also known as *wicha kunlasatri,* from Princess Niphanopphadon, who was a daughter of King Chulalongkorn (Phunphitsamai, 1990). *Wicha kunlasatri* (elite woman course) that the princess mentioned in her memoir included the learning of crochet, knitting, cooking, manners, and women's fashion (Phunphitsamai, 1990). This aspect of the learning experience that elite women could derive from the inner court highlights the distinct quality of palace women from others outside the royal palace, and it was the most formal form of education for palace women of the pre-modern era.

Education for Commoner Women

For non-elite women, the choice of education was rather restricted. Pha-op Posakritsana (born 1912, died 1983), one of the first female graduates from the Faculty of Arts at Chulalongkorn University, wrote in her memoir that the only available school option for her primary education was a non-registered school where a literate woman

opened her house to teach the children in the neighborhood, also known as villagers' school (Dutsadi, 1993). Unlike girls who were born in aristocratic families, Pha-op did not have a chance to attend the most prestigious academy at the time, which was located within the royal palace.

Apart from the villagers' schools set up by local Thais, education for women was also actively promoted by Western missionary women as early as 1837 when Mrs Bradley, wife of Dr. Bradley who brought modern printing technology to Siam and founded the first Thai newspaper *Bangkok Recorder*, started teaching local children in their residence in Thonburi (Phitsanu, 2004). Nevertheless, the missionaries' promotion of female education faced great difficulties, which mainly sprang from parents' concerns. Their two major concerns were: the idea of sending their daughters out of their households to day schools was an act against the good custom of a proper lady; and fear of the promotion of Christianity taught by missionaries (Yupphaphon, 1987). The missionary women even taught without charging the parents when they first founded Kunlasatri Wang Lang School in 1874, located on the Thonburi side of Chao Phraya River opposite the Grand Palace. Students had to make a contract with the school for three or five years as the school was also committed to provide students with accommodation, food, and clothes (Phitsanu, 2004: Yupphaphon, 1987). With the school's income based solely on donations, financial instability was unavoidable. Wang Lang was restructured in 1890 under the leadership of a new headmistress, Miss Edna S. Cole. With the popularity of English learning among Siamese elites that had widely expanded from the palace in the last decade of the nineteenth century, the Wang Lang School transformed its curriculum to meet this growing demand by putting a greater concentration on the teaching of English and charging a school tuition fee (Yupphaphon, 1987). The new image of Wang Lang School attracted a number

of urban bourgeois Bangkokians who were willing to pay for their daughters' education as a way to enhance their social status. At the same time, royal women of the Siamese court saw this growing popularity of missionary schools as a cause for a modern establishment of public female education. By the initiative of Queen Saowapha, Siamese female education underwent a period of modern reform, which will be explored in the next part of this chapter.

Royal Elite Female Initiative in the Modernisation of Female Education

With reforms introduced in the reign of King Chulalongkorn, skilled human resources were essential in order to strengthen the new administration. In order to recruit a skilled work force, education (for boys) became the key foundation that Siam needed to establish. The first male school that the king sponsored, *Rongrian Mahatlek* (School of Royal Pages), was founded within the royal palace in 1872 (Arwut, 2014). The objective of the school responded directly to the increasing demand of male clerks in the offices of the new administration. While sons of aristocrats enrolled in this royal-sponsored school with the aim to pursue careers in the king's offices, it was more fashionable for sons of the king to go study in Europe and return to Siam to take high positions in the new founded ministries. Even for commoner boys, education became more accessible for them by the end of the nineteenth century when the first vocational school, under the supervision of post and telegraph department, was established in 1889 in order to produce local telegraph operators (Arwut, 2014). In contrast to the above-mentioned evidence of early initiatives of education for boys, the royal sponsorship for female education hardly existed. For Siam's immediate needs, King Chulalongkorn demonstrated his strong support in education for

boys, opposite to his stance against education for girls. This part of the chapter will focus on the struggles of royal elite women and their initiatives in modernising female education.

Reforms in the administration of the *fai nai* under Rama the Fifth studied in chapter II equipped many royal elite women with skills and a level of education never previously enjoyed by Siamese women. Their roles had greatly increased in the administration of the Siamese court by the end of the nineteenth century. As the inner court expanded in size with the estimation of up to 3,000 women in the reign of King Chulalongkorn (r. 1868-1910), palace women were obliged to enhance their skills other than the domestic ones in order to take up roles in administration (Loos, 2005). While Wang Lang's good reputation increased among wealthy Bangkokians, aristocratic women of the inner court had transformed their domestic learning and informal literary teaching into formal education for the elite class of women. They founded the first publicly funded school for girls, Sunanthalai Girls' School, in 1892 and this time the lead was taken by the most powerful woman of the inner city in the reign of King Chulalongkorn---Queen Saowapha (figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1 Queen Saowapha (Somphop, 2012)

In fact, the history of female education has its gradual development from the reign of King Mongkut with the evidence of the missionary women's accounts as teachers in the inner court, such as Anna Leonowen's works (Leonowens 1870, 1873). Nevertheless, due to the lack of available literature, which mostly focuses on male education, the study of the history of female education in Siam is rather limited. Only in the immediate pre-revolution years from 1925 to 1932 did female voices begin to be heard in the public sphere through the growing woman's print media. Previous studies have failed to elaborate on the education for girls that existed in Siam before the modernising era. Nevertheless, Wyatt has mentioned Sunanthalai Girl's School, which was first founded in 1892 and was one of the earliest female schools in Siam (Wyatt, 1969, p 166). Unfortunately, the author carried out no further discussion about this school. Instead, he focused on Suan Anan and Suan Kulap schools, which were the first boys' schools in Siam. Eventhough the statistics illustrated the figures of female students who attended primary, secondary schools, and in higher institutions in the early twentieth century, no further emphasis was placed on analysis of female education.

Although King Chulalongkorn might have been seen as a supporter of education, as portrayed by the official history, his views on education for women were rather ambiguous. Because King Chulalongkorn did not see the importance of publicly funded female education, fee-paying day schools had already emerged by 1902 where 'well-to-do' Bangkokians would send their daughters to study (Barmé, 2002, p 22). As a result of this, when government schools for girls were established they immediately encountered the competition from the fee-paying day schools and missionary schools. Another evidence of the king's ambivalent support for female education was seen in the letter from Miss Smith

of 6 October, 1895. The principal of the Sunanthalai Girls' School expressed her disappointment with the king's decision to close down the school and wrote this letter as a petition to him by requesting the king to pay a visit to the school (M R. 5 S/17). Although King Chulalongkorn wrote in his reply to Miss Smith that he had no intention to shut down the school and what she had heard was only a rumour, he suggested to the Minister of Education that the government should not spend its revenue too much on girls' education. As a consequence, in 1902 the temporary closing of the school was proposed as a solution for the school's financial difficulty (M R. 5 S/17).

The following part of this chapter aims to study the historical development of female education in the discourse of class conflict between elite women of the early modern period of Siam as a parallel development to the rising literary level of Siamese society. In the last twenty years of the nineteenth century Siam, women were open to the first formal forms of education, which were initiated by both aristocratic women of the inner court and Western missionaries. While missionary schools became increasingly popular among the wealthy Siamese families, women of the inner court also had the first opportunity to receive formal education at Sunanthalai Girls' School, which was founded in 1892 as a royal-sponsored school to compete with the rival girls' schools run by missionaries.

Queen Saowapha: Royal Supporter for Early Siamese Girls' Schools

Besides the queen's renowned governing skills when she was acting as the King's regent during his visit to Europe in 1897, Saowapha was also a great moderniser of the inner court, especially with regard to the training and education of palace women. With the growing awareness of the Christian encroachment through the promotion of modern

education, the queen took the initiative to found the first public-funded girls' school within the inner court. Apart from the aim to support female education with Buddhist morality instead of Christianity, the idea of charity that was promoted through the Royal Consort Suthasininat's nursery, which was established in 1890, also greatly inspired Queen Saowapha to sponsor the opening of Sunanthalai School. Consort Suthasininat's grief for losing her child had given her the idea of opening this nursery for orphans and children from low-income families.[7] While education had been restricted to girls of the aristocratic background, the formation of Suthasininat's nursery was a remarkable initiative and an inspiration for Queen Saowapha to enhance elite female education (Damrong, 1929). In response to the concern about the missionaries' motives to convert students to Christianity and the pressure from the civilised West for female quality, Queen Saowapha finally founded Sunanthalai Girls' School in 1892 (figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2 Sunanthalai building (Rajini School, n.d.)

[7] Prince Damrong notes that there were seven major purposes of this nursery: "(i) To take care of the poor orphans; (ii) To raise them up to the age of 11 and 13 for boys and girls, respectively; (iii) To train them to be able to make a living; (iv) To provide care and services for free without charging the parents of the children; (v) To have a full right of the children; (vi) To protect and provide these children with security; (vii) This nursery will be fully supported by the queen" (Damrong, 1929, p 2-4).

Following the opening of the first publicly funded girls' school, the royal elites had a positive response to the idea of education for their daughters. Girls moved from the residences of prominent consorts within the inner city into the newly founded girls' boarding school. As discussed in detail in the following section, although this school was established with the aim to minimise Christian influence, the first teachers employed were in fact missionary women, as the number of literate Siamese women who could teach was still limited.

Nonetheless, these teachers were obliged to follow the Thai custom. *Khunying* Sin Suphansombat (born c. 1890), a former student of Sunanthalai School from 1894 to 1900, recorded that the missionaries who taught at Sunanthalai had to adjust themselves to Thai custom i.e. to prostrate themselves and learn royal greetings, unlike the case of the Wang Lang School, which was more Western and where foreign teachers did not have to follow the Thai customs (Anon., 2010, p 29). This was one of the distinct qualities of Sunanthalai Girls' School that the queen promoted. The queen wanted to make Sunanthalai a model school for other girls' schools in Siam. As a result, she accepted the proposal from the General Secretary of Education Department, Prince Kittiyakon-Waralak, to start the training course for potential female teachers in 1896 (M R. 5 S/17, p 43). Six students of Sunanthalai School were enrolled in the teaching training course and their tuition and all expenses were fully sponsored by the queen (M R. 5 S/17). Mrs. Robertson, the headmistress of the school at the time, had agreed to train the six teacher trainees in that year. In addition, these trainees also had to agree to work for the government when they completed their studies. This remarkable idea of Queen Saowapha greatly modernised female education in Siam.

The second step that Queen Saowapha took in the process of modernising female education, in the newly founded Sunanthalai School, was to concentrate on the learning of (royal) domestic skills (housekeeping, cooking, and knitting) as well as academic learning. She even used this aspect of Sunanthalai School to highlight its benefits in resisting the education commissioner's proposal to close the school in 1902 (M R. 5 S/17). Nevertheless, the school was temporarily closed for financial reasons as in this particular year, the number of students declined to 17 from the 110 students who had been enrolled in 1894 (Yupphaphon, 1987, p 25). The queen saw that the major Problems of the school was the curriculum that was too Western for Siamese (Anon., 2010, p 32). As a consequence, Saowapha invited the Japanese educator Miss Yasui Tetsu (born 1870, died 1945) and her assistants Miss Nakajima Tomiko, and Miss Kono Kiyoko (figure 3.3) to teach at the newly founded Rajini Girls' School that replaced Sunanthalai in 1903 (Anon., 2010, p 40). In the same year, four palace women (*nang nai*), Khajon, Pit, Nuan, and Li, also received scholarships to go to Japan for domestic training (figure 3.4). Saowapha claimed in her reply to the commissioner that she had hoped that the newly hired Japanese teachers would include specialised domestic skills in their teaching, which would suit the Siamese elites more than the Western curriculum that Sunanthalai School previously used.

Figure 3.3 Miss Yasui Tetsu (middle) and her assistants, Miss Nakajima Tomiko (left), and Miss Kono Kiyoko (right) c. 1907 (Embassy of Japan in Thailand, 2014)

Figure 3.4 First Siamese Government Scholarship Students in Japan including the four Siamese female students (middle row) c. 1904 (Embassy of Japan in Thailand, 2014)

This turning away from the Western to the Eastern curriculum was an innovative attempt in female education, which differentiated Sunanthalai Girls' School from the Christian missionary schools, such as Kunlasatri Wang Lang. By this time, two sets of resistance against female education had already emerged. These were the competition between Thai and Western influence over education, and class tensions between royal and commoner elites. Both issues will be examined in the following part of this chapter.

Thai vs. *Farang* (Westerners) Rivalry

By the end of the nineteenth century, Siamese male authorities were taking the reactive position rather than a pro-active position in regard to the development of female education. This was in contrast to male education, which King Chulalongkorn had a strong will to promote as a way to bring up the nation to the equal level to the West. The modernisation of male education arrived in Siam at the same time as other Western-influenced reforms King Chulalongkorn had launched as a result of his own ambivalence due to fear and admiration of the West. As Wyatt stated, "Chulalongkorn learned only slowly the difference between Westernisation and modernisation" (Wyatt, 1969, p 380). Only later in the 1880s, Prince Damrong discovered that Siamese education could be modernised without Westernisation when he launched a modern reform on Suan Kulap School and monastery schools. In other words, the Siamese rulers were taking the pro-active stance in reforming male education along the Western standard, yet to serve the Siamese functions. By the end of Chulalongkorn's reign, the ruling class had already established a firm grip of control over male education and its curriculum. However, in the case of women, the education system was more complicated as there was no public support until the end of the nineteenth century. While males were already getting education in publicly funded schools, female education was discouraged by the king. Although Queen Saowapha had tried her best to finally found Sunanthalai School in 1892, she was still behind the missionaries who had already established Kunlasatri Wang Lang in 1874 (figure 3.5). The official form of schooling for girls was first initiated by the American missionaries in 1874, eighteen years before the founding of Sunanthalai Girls' School. Being aware that she was lagging behind the missionaries, Queen Saowapha proposed to

the king that Sunanthalai School would focus on promoting Buddhist morality and domestic skills of the inner court culture. She argued that both qualities made Sunanthalai different and superior than the existing missionary schools. Nonetheless, this evidence highlights the Thai-*farang* (Westerners) rivalry that emerged by the beginning of the twentieth century.

There were two limitations in the launching of publicly funded education for women: first, the lack of female teachers; and second, the difficulty in designing a curriculum that supported the customs and norm of the inner court and prevented the possible adoption of Western behaviours (Waruni, 1981, p 169). As a result, publicly funded female schools were already lagging behind missionary schools when they were founded. The new publicly funded schools were academically weak when compared to the popular Western style of curriculum offered in missionary schools. In order to understand the rivalry between the Thais and *farangs* in female education, the history of the first missionary funded Girls' School, Kunlasatri Wang Lang, will now explored.

Kunlasatri Wang Lang: The Rival Missionary Girls' School

Figure 3.5 Kunlasatri Wanglang School in its early days (Samakhom Sit Wang Lang, 2005)

Emily Royce Bradley (born [nd.], died 1845), wife of Doctor Bradley, had founded one of the earliest schools for the Siamese middle class in Siam. While Doctor Bradley was working his way up to establish connections with the court of Siam, his wife had opened her house to teach girls in the Thonburi neighborhood from 1837. This is evidence that Protestant missionaries were the first group of people who initiated the promotion of female education in Siam. As far back as the reign of King Mongkut, missionary women had worked to open schools for girls. Nevertheless, they never succeeded until 1874, when Mrs Harriet House founded the first girls' boarding school in Siam named after its founder, Harriet M. House School for Girls (figure 3.6), with the fund she had collected from donors in the United States. This school was later known by the name Kunlasatri Wang Lang, but more commonly known in short as Wang Lang (Samakhom Sit Wang Lang, 2005).

Figure 3.6 Harriet House and two Siamese female students (Wanglang Watthana Alumni Association n.d.)

Figure 3.7 Miss Edna Cole, the moderniser of Kunlasatri Wanglang School (Samakhom Sit Wang Lang, 2005)

From the first day that the school had opened, its major aim was to recruit students of all classes and family backgrounds. One example is Tuan, born of Chinese origins but who had been influenced by the Christian faith. She was one of the students in the first class of Wang Lang School, and became a key figure in the school's history. Mrs. House, the headmistress of Wang Lang School at the time, appointed Tuan as the manager of the school when she had to leave Siam due to health problems in 1877 (Phitsanu, 2004). This was a difficult time for Wang Lang School but Tuan managed to keep the school going. She was one of a few middle-class women at that time who had both a good command of English and a charisma among the students' parents. It was noted that parents of the students of Wang Lang respected and trusted Tuan and she was one of the reasons for them to send their daughters to study at Wang Lang School. What was phenomenal about Tuan was not only her skills but also her social position that had improved through her contribution to Wang Lang School. Given that Tuan was born with Chinese origins and came from a middle-class family in the provinces,[8] it would be quite hard to imagine her as

[8] Tuan was born in Ratchaburi Province. She enrolled at Wang Lang School in 1874 and returned to Ratchaburi to get married. Upon her husband's death, Tuan decided to go back to Bangkok for her children's

a manager of the school. While most literate women were concentrated within the palace, Tuan had revealed that the opportunity for middle-class women from commoner backgrounds was open at Wang Lang School.

Wang Lang became even more popular among Bangkok's urban population, especially those wealthy merchants, when Miss Edna Cole (born 1854, died 1949) became a new headmistress in 1885 (figure 3.7). The most innovative step that Miss Cole introduced to the school was to start charging tuition fees. Before 1885, Wang Lang had taught children for free as Thai parents were not familiar with the concept of schools for girls. Nevertheless, Miss Cole realised that donations alone could not guarantee the financial stability of the school, and she introduced the tuition fee of 5-6 Baht per month to the class of 1885 (Samakhom Sit Wang Lang, 2005). Teachers were concerned whether there would be enough students when parents had to pay for their daughters' education. However, the apparent increase in the popularity of English learning among the urban population attracted parents to send their daughters to Wang Lang School. Apart from the increasing popularity of the school, Miss Cole also spent the school's profit on its renovation and expansion. The new modern building attracted the well-off Bangkokians even more than before. From 1885, Wang Lang School gained a reputation as a school of English with the representation of modern image of Siamese women of the new era.

Aprt from the improved facilities, another modern aspect of Wang Lang School was best seen in the making of the first female students' magazine *Saeng Arun* or *The Day Break* that had its first issue in 1892. Run by Miss Cole and a Thai teacher, Suwan, the magazine proved to be a successful contributor to the reputation of the school. *The Day Break* consisted of about fifty pages of articles on history, biographies, arts, poetry,

education. As Mrs. House, the headmistress, was leaving the school, she invited Tuan to work as a manager of the school until 1885. See Phitsanu (2004).

domestic skills for women, and Christian teachings, most of which were translated from English articles (Tat, 1974). The magazine expanded its audience even outside the school community. Even *Phraya* Sueksa Sombun, a royal commissioner of the Ministry of Education at the time, told Miss Cole that he had read all the issues and wanted to include articles on domestic skills for distribution in public girls' schools (Tat, 1974, p 87). From this point, Wang Lang School had demonstrated its dominance in Siamese female education and set up a trend for other girls' schools to follow. Rajini School (former Sunanthalai Girls' School) also established its first issue of a school magazine, *Rajini Bamrung* in 1927, but thirty-five years after *The Day Break*. In addition, the involvement of student writers was also a significant development. Female voices, were for the first time, expressed by the women themselves. Considering all of the issues, Wang Lang School had progressed far beyond other girls' schools in Siam in terms of its modern magazines and became a model for modern girls' schools in the following era.

Class Conflict between Royal and Commoner Elite Women

Apart from the fact that both Sunanthalai and Wang Lang had opened up opportunities for women to gain education, these schools also signaled a class conflict between female elites. The current study on history of Thai education by Arwut Teeraeak (2014), *The Siamese State's Mangaement of the English Language Education in the Reign of King Chulalongkorn (kan chatkan kan-sueksa phasa angkrit khong rat-sayam nai samai somdetphra Chunlachomklaochaoyuhua)*, suggests that there has always been a thin glass ceiling in the access to English education in Siam, where it was reserved solely for potential government employees and those who could afford the tuition fee. With this

statement, I argue that the segregation of English education is only the beginning point of the class conflict between aristocrats and commoners especially in the case of female education.

The conflicts of class and different ideologies can be seen in the competition between two girls' schools. Given that Wang Lang was founded by missionaries who had determination to promote Christianity, Sunanthalai had chosen this aspect to compete with Wang Lang by making it more 'Thai' with the inclusion of Buddhist values and aristocratic manners. As a result, Sunanthalai became a popular school for girls with aristocratic origins. Plus, the school's association with the palace and sponsorship by Queen Saowapha also earned it a reputation as a place for learning specialised domestic skills. On the other hand, while Wang Lang School was lacking in domestic training, it promoted fair access to education, especially to daughters of rising middle-class families who had wealth to spend for education. As Miss Cole, the headmistress of Wang Lang School from 1885 to 1923, wrote in a school advertising poster "This is a place for children's learning. We welcome anybody who wishes to send their children here" (Samakhom Sit Wang Lang, 2005, p 23). The openness of the school in terms of its recruitment reflects the class conflict between women in the realm of education. In order to analyse this class conflict, I will, in the following part of this chapter, explore Sunanthalai or Rajini School (since 1902) as an extension of the inner city. Then, the openness of Wang Lang School to non-aristocratic children of urban Bangkokians will be elaborated later as a contribution to the emergence of a literate group of women who rose into the public scene in the pre-revolutionary years.

Traditional elites and Sunanthalai/Rajini Girls' School

As the inner court had tremendously expanded during King Chulalongkorn's reign, Queen Saowapha sought to expand the pre-existing education of young girls by supporting the establishment of the new Sunanthalai Girls' School in 1892. Therefore, it might not be wrong to regard Sunanthalai as an extension of the inner court during its heyday. Students of Sunanthalai School were recruited from the inner court. As recorded in the interview of Princess Chongchitthanom Diskul (born 1886, died 1978), a daughter of Prince Damrong, "students in the first generation of the school were those who had studied in the palace before the school was founded, such as Princess Montharop Kommalat, Princess Phichittrapha Thewakun (who later became the headmistress of Rajini school), and Princess Chantaranipha" (Sulak, 1986). Princess Chongchitthanom Diskul enrolled at Sunanthalai in 1894 and her classmates were all daughters of high-ranking aristocrats. This evidence demonstrates that Sunanthalai was truly an exclusive place for elite women with royal affiliations.

Sunanthalai's new curriculum was also designed to combine both academic and domestic training. Subjects in the curriculum included reading, writing, mathematics, geography, and domestic learning of arts and crafts (Yupphaphon, 1987). While students' academic outcome was the focus of the new curriculum, western manners and English language learning also became important components of students' activities at Sunanthalai. Victorian period influences were also seen in the school as much as it had been promoted within the inner court. Princess Chongchitthanom reported that each student had to take turns to have lunch with '*khru maem*' (Female missionary teachers) in order to learn proper Western table manners (Chongchitthanom, 2007). In the afternoon, they also played cricket,

tennis, and croquet. All of these sports were commonly played within the inner court and were considered to be sports of the Victorian aristocrats.

Furthermore, Queen Saowapha's role in Sunanthalai (and later in Rajini school) as the main royal sponsor highlighted the way this institution distinguished itself from others as royal-sponsored schools. When the government's plan to build Rajini School was approved in order to replace Sunanthalai, which was in decline, the Queen agreed to be the main sponsor for the school and granted it the title of *Rajini* or 'Queen' in Thai. When compared to Wang Lang School, that was the rival girls' school at that time, Queen Saowapha's sponsorship assured more trust from the parents to send their children to study at Rajini School. Moreover, under the queen's name, the school was able to raise funds for further expansion of its facilities (Yupphaphon, 1987). Traditionally Thai monarchs believed in building temples as a way to achieve merit but Saowapha believed that sponsoring schools for girls was a modern way of making merit that would also enhance the status of women in Siamese society (Yupphaphon, 1987). Once again, Rajini School illustrated its affiliation with the queen as a power to exclusively recruit students of the aristocratic class.

The employment of the Japanese teachers was also a strategy to avoid the influence of Western missionaries. Although missionary women were previously employed in the inner court as teachers, they were not fully trusted by Queen Saowapha. In 1892, the King had opposed the idea of the formation of government-sponsored girls' school, proposed by Queen Saowapha and Prince Damrong, by claiming that "girls' schools had already been established by missionaries and to put *mae* Lek[9] in charge would be out of her capability" (M R. 5 S. 1/5, p 171). Nevertheless, the plan was approved in 1902 with Saowapha's

[9] Refers to Queen Saowapha (her nickname).

assertion that foreign teachers were not suitable to teach at Rajini School because they would only encourage young girls to become more Westernised. Therefore, the queen suggested the employment of three Japanese teachers, Miss Yasui Tetsu, Miss Kiyo Kawano, and Miss Toshi Nakajima (Yupphaphon, 1987: Anon., 2010). All three Japanese ladies arrived to Bangkok in February 1903. Miss Yasui was the headmistress and responsible for English, mathematics, and science courses, while Kiyo and Toshi taught mainly domestic skills and arts (Anon., 2010). In the meantime, the queen also pursued the aim to transform the school into a teaching college by sending out four inner court ladies: Khajon, Pit, Nuan, and Li, to study in Japan (figure 3.4)[10] (Yupphaphon, 1987: Anon., 2010). All of these ladies had successfully completed their studies and returned to teach at Rajini in 1907 in time for the departure of the Japanese teachers. The queen saw that Siam and Japan shared similar customs and manners. As a result, she believed that the training of Japanese teachers would produce quality female graduates with the proper manners of a noble lady.

The Rise of Commoner Elite Women and Kunlasatri Wang Lang

The opportunity for education for middle-class girls expanded even more with Wang Lang School's new location. Miss Cole, who was considered to be a moderniser of Wang Lang School and later Watthana School (from 1919), had demonstrated her determination to open Wang Lang School for all girls regardless of their family backgrounds. The change of location from adjacent to the palace (Wang Lang) to Bang Kapi was a challenging step for the school. Situated in Wang Lang area, the school had more possibility to attract girls from aristocratic families. However, with the limited space

[10] There are no further records of these four women upon their return from Japan.

and the founding of the publicly funded Rajini School, Miss Cole's only solution to the survival of the school was to move its location to the bigger property she had purchased on the further east side of Bangkok. She had hoped that the new buildings, facilities, and even the new given name 'Watthana' would help promote the school. The new name 'Watthana' means progress and prosperity, which was sometimes also referred to as 'watthanakan' ('evolution' or 'development') (Ratchabandittayasathan, 1999, p 1058). Miss Cole had developed knowledge of Thai, after having spent forty-four years in Siam, enough to choose this modern term as a new name for the legendary first missionary girl's school. With the fact that Rajini School was seen as the extension of the inner court and a reserved place for aristocratic domestic skills, the new look of Watthana Academy might also have signaled a change in the targeted group of girls who would be likely to attend this institution. The growth of the urban middle class, which comprised a large group of Chinese merchants, was undeniably significant in Bangkok during the turn of the twentieth century. These families were willing to pay for school education for their children, especially when their daughters would be guaranteed to get full training in the English language. Moreover, the name 'Watthana' also symbolised the school's independence from all affiliations it previously had with the Royal Palace. The old name Kunlasatri Wang Lang associated the school with noble women's values (*kunlasatri*) and its proximity to the palace (Wang Lang). Although the school was fully operated by foreign missionaries, the term *kunlasatri*, which means a proper lady from a noble family background, gave an aristocratic sense to its name (Ratchabandittayasathan, 1999, p 135). On the other hand, the new name of 'Watthana' signified the modern image of the school that broke away from royal affiliations and opened up for new groups of parents. The school's target on middle-class students eventually led to the class tensions among groups of literate women in the pre-revolutionary years of the 1920s and 1930s.

A number of middle-class girls of non-aristocratic families who were enrolled in the previous Wang Lang School became active women in the pre-revolutionary years. Suwan and Tat Prathipasen were students from the first years of the establishment of the school. Suwan enrolled at the school in 1881 and became one of the very few Thai teachers at Wang Lang. Suwan mastered in English literature so she was once employed to teach English for princes and princesses, such as Princess Orapin Penpak and Prince Cheudchom, who were a daughter and son of King Chulalongkorn. Suwan had brought great pride to the community of Wang Lang and gave it a reputation for a school of English. Another alumnus, Tat Prathipasen, also became a voice of middle-class women by joining the first formal Association of Thai Women founded in 1934. These examples illustrate that women of non-aristocratic backgrounds could also enhance their social position up to the elite level through quality education they gained from Wang Lang School.

Moreover, classrooms at Wang Lang also had an increased number of upper middle-class students by the time of the pre-revolutionary years, i.e. children of high government officials. Roem Chanthaphimpha (born 1909) and Jirawat Phibunsongkhram (born 1921) were both active commoner elite women in the post-absolutist era. Roem was born in the province of Khon Kaen in 1909, and her father was a public prosecutor of that province. When she reached seven years old, Roem was sent to Bangkok to enroll at the newly established Watthana Academy. She finished her studies in 1928 and became a regular short-story writer for the newspaper *Prachamit*. In fact, Roem began to write from the time she was a student at Watthana, with her involvement in the school's magazine, *Watthana Magazine*. Her school years at Watthana greatly supported Roem to be one of the most influential female writers in the post-absolutist era. Her works as a writer often reflect the social problems after the Second World War, such as economic problems, smuggling,

and political corruption. Roem demonstrated her confidence in writing these articles, which were controversial for women to write at that time (Thawanwon, 1951). Another former student of Watthana School who became a new voice of literate women was Jirawat Phibunsongkhram, daughter of Field Marshal Phibun, who was Prime Minister from 1938 to 1944 and again from 1948 to 1957, and La-iad Phibunsongkhram. Throughout her childhood, she witnessed the political career of her parents and became one of the prominent members of the Female Cultural Committee found in 1942 (*Thaipost*, 2009). Her task was to assist La-iad Phibunsongkhram, the chair of the committee, in reforming the cultural roles for women in accordance with the Cultural Mandates (See more details in chapter VII *Re-entering the Public Sphere: Wartime and Post-war Roles of Thai Elite Women*).

The evidence mentioned above, highlights the rise of literate women (of aristocratic and non-aristocratic backgrounds) in Bangkok society. In other words, education widened the space for women and supported the voice of a new elite group following the decline of the inner city after 1910 as education expanded outside the palace. The education that was confined only among the aristocrats within the court of Siam was expanded to the outsiders by the early twentieth century. The abolition of the inner city, with the decline of the number of palace women, opened the way for female education to develop outside the boundary of the palace and this supported the emergence of the new commoner elite women of Siam.

Conclusion

The reforms in the administration of the inner court under King Chulalongkorn studied in chapter II equipped many royal elite women with skills and a level of education never previously enjoyed by Siamese women. As a result, the aristocratic women within the royal palace, led by Queen Saowapha, were the first ones who founded the public education for girls by the late nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the queen did not get approval from King Chulalongkorn, who initially opposed the idea of female education until 1892. With the delay, a public girls' school was finally founded by the initiative of Queen Saowapha but it immediately faced competition from the established missionary girls' school. The Thai-*farang* (Western) rivalry had a major impact on Siamese women. This rivalry expanded the opportunity for women to access education on a wider social scale. When literacy was reserved only for aristocratic women within the inner court, the missionary school granted a chance for commoner women to learn how to read and write, including women of the mercantile classes. This eventually led to the competition between Thai aristocratic women and the newly emerged commoner elite women in the field of education by the early twentieth century. The function of the term 'elite woman' (*ying phudi*) was then redefined with a modern connotation that includes both women who were determined elites by birth and those by education. The commoner elites who earned their skills from private institutions emerged in the public sphere. Access to education allowed these commoner women to enhance their social status and they began to compete against the aristocratic elite women by the pre-revolutionary years of the late 1920s. This competition between the two groups of women is not only seen in education, but also shaped the concept of femininity in Siam, which will be the focus issue of the next chapter.

Chapter IV

Defining 'Femininity': The Emerging Competition between Aristocratic and Commoner Women

Introduction

This chapter aims to define the cultural image of 'femininity' between two groups of women, the aristocrats and commoners, during the Siam's political and social transitions. I will first take the issue of female subordination in the traditional Siamese image of femininity as the beginning point to discuss the gradual development of the elite image of femininity that had emerged by the second half of the nineteenth century during the reign of King Mongkut. Western visitors and Siamese elites who travelled to the West and interacted with the Westerners, and Western-style newspapers and journals, were agents of the diffusion of a Western civilised image among Siamese women (Suwadee, 1989). However, the decline of the aristocrats and royal elites was a provoking factor to the emergence of the competition of the cultural image of femininity in the late 1920s. The rising middle class had adopted the popular icon of the 'Modern Girl' that appeared in the growing print media industry. As a result, there was a clash between the elite image of the 'Civilised Lady' (*ying phudi*) and the commoner icon of the 'Modern Girl' (*sao samai*).

In order to explore the transformation of Siamese images of femininity from the absolutist to the post-absolutist period, I will divide this chapter into three major parts. The

first part of this chapter will concentrate on the gradual development of the image of civilised women by focusing on aristocratic women who lived in the private quarters of the Bangkok palace. The definition, class, and the Victorian-era influences on Siamese women of the absolutist regime will be explored. Then, the second part of this chapter will approach the transition of the cultural images of femininity by investigating the newly emerged icon of the Siamese Modern Girl (*sao samai*) in the women's print media industry between 1925 and 1933. This icon highlights the voice of middle-class women and their will to represent themselves without the influence of men. The Modern Girl appeared to demand gender equality (often related to the criticism of male polygamous practice); and women's participation in politics. Finally, in the third part, I will discuss the competition that emerged between aristocratic women and commoner women in the cultural domain of images of femininity. The comparison of images of the 'Civilised Lady' and 'Modern Girl' will highlight tensions between royal and commoner elites and will be analysed in the last part of this chapter.

The Traditional Image of Femininity

Before discussing the aristocratic image of femininity that had been shaped by the Western influences of the nineteenth century, the traditional image of femininity needs to be elaborated first. The cultural image of femininity in the traditional period reflects the subordinated status of women in Siamese society, with the exception of the representations of warrior queens in official national publications. Representations of Siamese elite women in Thai national history from the Ayutthaya period demonstrate the expected female dual roles in both the domestic and public spheres. The example of a female heroine, Queen Suriyothai who died in battle while protecting the king, emphasised the importance of

women's role in being a loyal wife while serving to defend the nation from foreign enemies. The femininity here is the strong woman who is active in both public and domestic spheres. Although the expected dual roles of women were widely popular in national history, foreign visitors' accounts suggest that women's roles outside the domestic sphere barely existed in Siam prior to the late 1920s. Jean-Baptiste Pallegoix, the French priest appointed as vicar apostolic of Siam in the mid-nineteenth century, wrote in his observation on Siamese commoner women that, "education for girls is learning how to cook, making cigarettes and preparing betel leaves…The girls collect fire-wood, vegetables and fruits, fetch water, grind rice and help their mothers with household chores" (Pallegoix, p 207 in Suwadee, 1989, p 48). This account demonstrates the point that Siamese women's role was rather limited to the private sphere of their household duty, and that they tolerated their subordinate position to men who dominated the public sphere. The female subordinate position in Siam, according to Suwadee Tanaprasitpatana, was, to a great extent, constituted by the limited education of women, as Pallegoix mentioned. Although Pallegoix's statement focused on the lives of commoner women and it can be argued that women of the aristocratic and royalty backgrounds would have had better education, the elite female training in the inner court had always emphasised the priority for women to learn domestic skills similar to the commoner women. Apart from education, the expected reproductive role of women as mothers, and the legitimised control of men over the female body and sexuality were also the major mechanisms of Siamese female subordination (Suwadee, 1989). Siamese laws and traditions determined women's position in Siam all through the early Bangkok era. Nevertheless, Siamese female status was slowly enhanced and became active in the public sphere by the decade before the revolution in 1932 due to various factors, both from foreign influences and among Siamese elites themselves and this

led to the emergence of the competition between women in the process of defining femininity.

Defining Aristocratic Femininity: Civilised Lady of Absolutist Regime

One of the Thai words that have been used to refer to women is *satri*. Although the term literally translates as 'women', it usually combines with the term *kun* (surname, family) to form the new term *kunlasatri* which means "the women of good family background and good behaviour" (The Royal Institute, 2007). This notion of *kunlasattri* became manifest in the beginning of women's print media during the final years of King Chulalongkorn's reign. The term appeared publicly as early as 1906 when one of the women's magazines emerged under the name *Kunlasatri.* As the major readers of women's magazines in the early twentieth century were the elite women of aristocratic backgrounds, their tastes in Western modernity were made apparent in these magazines. As a consequence of the popularity of Western lifestyles, aristocratic women became indoctrinated to be models of modern women of the *siwilai* (civilised) Siam, the borrowed English term that King Mongkut first used in the mid-nineteenth century. Susan Kepner explained in her Ph.D dissertation *A Civilised Woman: A Cultural Biography of M.L. Boonlua Thepyasuwan* that the borrowed English term *siwilai* refers to "those attributes of a 'civilised' person, or nation, that reflect Western thinking, and Western behaviour, as King Mongkut first perceived them, and as many Thais since have defined and sometimes sought to emulate them" (Kepner, 1998, p xivi). This directly influenced the status of Siamese elite women of the absolutist era. They took the role in representing themselves as *siwilai* models while maintaining the expected roles in their domestic domain.

The two core qualities of Siamese *siwilai* women involved the traditional concept of *phudi*, and the social etiquette and value influenced by the Victorian era. The first quality of *phudi* will first be explored here. The word *phudi* literally translates as "good people" but Siamese often relate it to the way they described the aristocratic elites (Kepner, 1998, p xxix). In fact, Susan Kepner discussed that *phudi* are "those who know how to behave properly, and do so", which seems to refer to commoners as well as the elites (Kepner, 1998, p 177). An early reference to commoner *phudi,* as well as those of aristocratic backgrounds, was seen in *Attributes of the Gentleman (Sombat khong Phudi)* by *Phraya* Visudhi Suriyasak (also known as Pia Malakun), a work which was first published in 1912[11]. In this text, the author emphasised that the *phudi* is not necessarily born with wealth, nor a good family background. Rather, a *phudi* is a person who is naturally good in his/her thoughts and actions (Pia, 1955). This evidence reflects the ability of commoners to rise up the social scale to become a *siwilai* Siamese.

Receiving a good education is regarded to be an essential quality of a *phudi*, whether the person is a commoner or an aristocrat. Unfortunately, in the period prior to the female education reform of Queen Saowapha in 1890s, the available places for women to learn how to read and write were still limited. For aristocratic women, the opportunity to receive education was more available than for women from the lower classes. While girls of the aristocratic backgrounds had access to education and training at the royal palace, a small number of girls from middle-class and lower-class families either went to villagers' schools or American missionary schools (Dutsadi, 1993). The princesses and daughters of noblemen started their education around the age of eight within the inner court of the royal palace where older literate noble women held classes to teach them from basic literary skill

[11] The book was republished and distributed to students of public schools in Thailand in the Sarit period.

to arts and crafts, while missionary women were also occasionally employed to teach English and foreign languages from King Mongkut's reign to the beginning of the twentieth century when the publicly funded girls' school, Rajini, replaced them with Japanese teachers (see chapter III *Early Female Education in Siam: 1870-1910*). As a result of the prioritised access to education and other reserved skills, aristocratic women, such as the palace women, tended to be equipped with qualities suitable to be civilised women of the absolutist era.

Apart from the above-mentioned proper training and education of *phudi* that aristocratic women acquired, the Victorian-era influenced social etiquette also important because it made them perceive themselves as more civilised than others. The adoption of the Victorian era women's fashion and leisure activities highlights how Siamese women emulated those of the West. The traditional Siamese fashion that made women look similar to men with their short hairstyle and unisex *chongkraben* pantaloons, was replaced by the more feminine clothes and long hairstyle of the Victorian era women. Moreover, croquet, tennis, and cycling also became new sports for women of the Siamese court. King Chulalongkorn's consorts, princesses and the ladies-in-waiting were the first ones who encountered these social changes of the elite life (see chapter II *Fai Nai [Inner City]: King Chulalongkorn 1868-1910*). Not only would the Victorian-era influences in fashion and lifestyle give the civilised image to the Siamese, as they imagined, but these influences complemented the *phudi* quality that was previously discussed. In other words, in order to be a complete aristocratic elite, the Siamese were required to demonstrate their ability to emulate civilised Westerners. The two qualities of *phudi* and *siwilai* had to go hand-in-hand.

Who were the civilised women of the absolutist era?

As the measurement for being elite was based on the abilities to demonstrate *phudi* and *siwilai* qualities, palace women were the minority group of Siamese women who had these abilities. Although the inner court of the royal palace where these women resided is represented in national history and Thai fictional accounts as a harmonious place, this location had its own dynamic of class, roles, and regulations. As demonstrated in chapter II, Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, half brother of King Chulalongkorn and considered the father of Thai history, recorded that there were three major classes of palace women: the high class (*chan sung*), middle class (*chan klang*), and low class (*chan tam*). The major consorts, daughters of the king, high-ranking princesses, and senior consorts of the late king were the high-class women of the inner court during the reign of King Chulalongkorn. These women held key positions in the inner court and resided in residences with their retinues. These female retinues were often recruited from middle-class palace women, which included daughters of middle-ranking aristocrats or wealthy non-noble families. Although the above-mentioned classes of palace women received quality training in the royal court, the low class of inner court women did not have the same opportunity to receive the royal sponsored education. These women of the lowest class of the Bangkok court were women of the commoner backgrounds. They performed labour tasks and guarded the palace gates under the title of *khlon* (palace female labourers) (see chapter II *Fai Nai [Inner City]: King Chulalongkorn 1868-1910*). Because low class women's written accounts do not exist, it is hard to determine the actual reactions of these women toward the Western modernity introduced to the inner court. However, the historical evidence demonstrates that the limited access to education and merits allowed these low class women to move up the social scale of the inner court. Some of the low class commoner women had earned merits

and rose to senior positions during King Chulalongkorn's reign. This serves as the evidence of class dynamism among the women of the Bangkok court. Nevertheless, the royal consorts and princesses were the only group of women who were considered as the major leading figures and role models for women in the period when the 'civilised' Westerners served as the role models of the Siamese monarchs. These women demonstrated their literacy, foreign language skills, domestic skills, and most importantly the ability to be *siwilai*. All of these will be elaborated in the following part of this chapter.

The Civilised (*siwilai*) Women

The attempt to create Siam in the image of *siwilai* was not only the way to emulate the West but was also the response to Western criticisms on Siamese way of life, which had a great level of impact on the elite class of the society. In response to the West, the Siamese monarchs carried out policies and reforms that gradually changed the lives of Siamese women. In fact, the first attempt to improve women's image as a response to Western criticism had begun in the reign of King Mongkut with his famous proclamation, resulting from *Amdaeng*[12] Muean's petition in the early 1860s, that prohibited parents and husbands to sell or exchange female members of the family (wives and daughters) into servitude (Suwadee, 1989). This proclamation granted *Amdaeng* Muean not only the freedom from slavery, but also made her the first Siamese commoner woman who had the right to choose her spouse. Nevertheless, this exception was not made possible for royal elite women; the decisions for their marriages still depended on their fathers. In other words, King Mongkut still preferred not to interfere with the social hierarchy among the aristocrats (Edwards &

[12] *Amdaeng* was a title used to refer to commoner women in Siam until 1917 when King Vajiravudh introduced the titles of *Nai* (Mr.), *Nang* (Mrs), *and Nangsao* (Miss), following the Western pattern.

Roces, 2004). In addition, cross-class marriages between the women of the elite class and commoner men were unlikely to occur.

By the reign of King Chulalongkorn, the impact of Western ideas became more influential in the court of Siam. The popular king had abolished slavery in Siam by 1905 and the status of Siamese women had been enhanced. Nonetheless, the abolition of slavery did not affect the lives of the aristocrats as much as the direct impact of the civilised West. New ideas on family life, sexual morality and social conduct that emerged in England in the late eighteenth century and were labeled as "Victorian social values" played a significant role in the lives of Siamese aristocrats, particularly from the reign of King Chulalongkorn to the reign of King Vajiravudh (Suwadee, 1989, p 78). Both the concept of gentility and the ideology of domesticity were reflected in the reforms that Siamese males introduced in the late nineteenth century. This was visible through the lives of the inner court women. Among Chulalongkorn's 152 consorts and 44 daughters had retinues, which could be estimated to be as many as 300 women in one residence (Loos, 2005). It was in this period of the last decade of the nineteenth century that the inner court of Bangkok had expanded its female population size to approximately 3,000 (Loos, 2005). These women, although they were not all from the aristocratic backgrounds as explained earlier, were exposed to the monarch's interpretation of the Victorian social values. Both the concept of gentility and the ideology of domesticity will be explored in detail here.

The concept of gentility, which could be explained as the elegant way of life, was directly adopted by the elite class of Siam. Women of the inner court, especially the highest class of major consorts and princesses, became agents of *siwilai* lifestyles. The royal self-representation was one of the aspects of the aristocrats' lifestyles that reflected the influence of the Victorian concept of gentility.

Figure 4.1 High-class palace women in their hybrid Victorian period attire (Thailand National Archives)

Maurizio Peleggi pointed out that the Siamese elites had different modes of self-representation for three different stages, 'the colonial', 'the domestic', and 'private realm' (Peleggi, 2002, p 61). In the colonial stage, aristocratic women appeared in full Victorian clothes with gloves and hats, while their fashion became more hybrid in the domestic stage, and still traditional in the private realm (figure 4.1). This evidence demonstrates that Siamese elite women, as instructed by the male monarchs, responded to the Victorian era-influenced concept of gentility through their fashion. Moreover, the inner court's leisure activities were also adjusted to conform with the elegant lifestyle of the Victorian era, such as photography being one of the most popular activities of palace women during Chulalongkorn's reign (figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 *Chaochom* Oep (left), known as a photographer of the inner court (Thailand National Archives)

Apart from fashion and photography, popular sports of the Victorian period such as croquet, tennis, and cycling became new sports for women of the Siamese court. At Sunanthalai Girls' School, which was founded to educate daughters of the aristocrats, students had to take these sports as their free time activities (Chongchitthanom, 2007). In the post-absolutist years after 1932, Princess Phunphitsamai (born 1895, died 1990), a former student of Sunanthalai Girls' School, still carried on playing the elite sport of golf even when she and her family were in exile in Penang (Phunphitsamai, 1990). From the above-mentioned evidence, we can see that the concept of the Victorian era gentility was reflected in various aspects of the *siwilai* lifestyles of the elite women of Siam from the reign of

King Chulalongkorn to the end of the absolutist regime in 1932. This makes the royal Siamese elite women the civilised models of the era.

Apart from the concept of gentility, another aspect of the Victorian era that is reflected on the transformation of the aristocratic image of femininity was the ideology of domesticity. This ideology was also adopted by the inner court women in the reign of King Chulalongkorn. The account of gender roles of Victorian era in England that promoted the separation between workplace and home should be added to the analysis here. Even though Vickery argues that the concept of separate spheres between public and private was proven insufficient to explain gender relations of Victorian-era England, this differentiation is nonetheless important to describe the roles of the Siamese settings within the royal palace. As it was assumed, men of this era went out to work, in the commercial sphere, and return home to relax in their private sphere where women were in charge. This change in the pattern of life among the middle-class population of the Victorian period resulted in new role given to women as 'mistress of the home' (Suwadee, 1989, p 80). Despite the invalidity of the separate spheres concept in the English case, the influences and skills of the perceived Victorian-era lady were still highly valued in the Siamese inner court. The Victorian women were expected to master domestic skills in order to perform the tasks of a housewife. Many bourgeois women of the nineteenth century in both the United States of America and England received lessons in "social etiquette, dancing, singing, painting and foreign languages" from the governesses, which were believed to prepare them to be efficient wives and mothers (Suwadee, 1989, 81). Similar to the situation but with the opposite aim, for the lower ranks of aristocratic girls, the domestic training granted them suitable marriage proposals by their qualified skills. But for high-ranking palace women, such as daughters of the king, they learned domestic skills, social etiquette, and English as

a way to enhance their roles in the royal public sphere. Some of the princesses held major positions in royal public setting of the Siamese court, for example Princess Naphaphonprapha who served as the General Secretary of the Inner City (*Somdet Athibodi*). Therefore the ideology of domesticity, on one hand, supported Siamese palace women to take on roles as mothers and wives, but on the other hand, it also enhanced the administrative roles of high-ranking women through the skills they acquired from the influence of Victorian era training.

In addition, although the presence of missionary women hired as governesses in the palace during the reign of King Mongkut, was evident, they no longer had the role in the inner court by the end of King Chulalongkorn's reign. As a result of the improved female education, the number of skilled women within the palace increased and was enough to take on the teaching role for the younger girls. In this way, the Siamese elite women managed to pass on their traditional domestic skills to the younger generation without interference by foreigners. Nevertheless, when the middle class began to rise during King Vajiravudh's reign (1910-1925), the Victorian era role model faced challenges from the newly emerged icon of Siamese modern femininity, *sao samai*, which will be explored in the next part of this chapter.

The Emergence of 'Modern Girl' *(sao samai)*

The rivalry between aristocratic and commoner elite women in education discussed in Chapter III laid the foundation for their competition in the cultural domain of images of appropriate femininity, which was reflected in the women's magazines of the 1920s. While the royal elites' image of femininity emphasised the mimesis of the civilised Westerners,

the icon of commoner women was modelled on the image of the bourgeois Modern Girl. This part of the chapter will elaborate the cultural image of femininity seen in the appearance of the Modern Girl icon in the pre-revolutionary Siamese women's magazines.

Modern Girl in Women's Print Media: Commoner Image of 'Femininity'

The closest Thai term that describes the concept of the Modern Girl as seen in old women's magazines was *sao samai,* which emerged in the 1920s. While this new term was introduced in order to define the new type of progressive women, it is important to note that the term *siwilai* that was widely used in the high-class magazines began to disappear by this time. It had been replaced by the term *than samai,* which refers to progress and modernity more than the mimicking of the West that *siwilai* represented in the late nineteenth-century Siam. The use of the term *siwilai*, in fact, was questioned in the women's magazine of Watthana Academy, the first girl's private school in Siam founded by American missionaries, as early as 1909. The student author criticised the Siamese interpretation of this adopted English term, that was used to affiliate with the idea of progress; and suggested that the term *charoen* would be more appropriate to the Siamese situation at the time ("New term" in *Watthana witthaya*, 1909). By the 1920s, the use of *siwilai* that referred to modernity and the Victorian-era influences encountered challenges posed by the new popular icon of Modern Girl. This part of the chapter will focus on the discussion on the transition of the Victorian era concept of women towards becoming the Modern Girl, the new Siamese icon of femininity, in the early twentieth century.

The death of King Chulalongkorn in 1910 had a great impact on the lives of palace women and eventually led to the decline of the inner court in the following decade. The

aristocratic women began to struggle as King Vajiravudh, who succeeded to the throne after Chulalongkorn, reduced the roles of palace women and opposed to the political polygynous practice of the former Chakri kings. As aristocratic women's position in the court of Bangkok declined, commoner women in the urban areas became increasingly literate through their improved access to education. In 1921, the government finally enacted a compulsory primary education law, requiring children to attend school until the age of 14. As a result, the percentage of girls' enrolment in schools dramatically increased, from seven percent in 1921 to 29 percent in 1922, and to 38 percent in 1925 (Vella, 1978, p 159 cited in Kepner, 1998, p 98). With this rise in female education that was made available to commoner women as well as aristocratic women by the 1920s, the number of women's magazines boomed in response to the growing women's literacy. It was in this period between 1920 and 1940 that the transition of Siamese female representations from the Victorian era model toward the icon of the Modern Girl (*sao samai*) occurred.

Images of the Siamese Modern Girl were best illustrated in the women's magazines of the pre-revolutionary decade in the 1920s. In this exploration of the Modern Girl images of Siamese femininity, I use the definition by the Modern Girl Around the World Research Group as a foundation for the discussion of this chapter.

> The Modern Girl was variously a symbol of social freedom, normative Western racial hierarchies, the universality of beauty, standards of hygiene and fashion, and a modernising economy (Weinbaum, Thomas, et al, 2008, p 350).

The Modern Girl Around the World Research Group compares the emergence of the icon of the Modern Girl as a social phenomena in various places around Asia. In China, the Modern Girl look was used by rural Chinese women to enter the urban society in order for them to "sneak into the elite marriage market" (Weinbaum, Thomas, et al, 2008, p 201). In

Okinawa, Japan, the Modern Girl served as a tool of Japanisation, hence, the link to Tokyo. And in India, the Modern Girl aroused the sentiment of "the racial politics of nationalism" (Weinbaum, Thomas, et al, 2008, p 169). While the icon of Modern Girl became popular by the 1930s, the Siamese *sao samai* also made her first appearance. One of the earliest images of Siamese Modern Girl emerged in the political newspaper *Bangkok kan-mueang* that was founded in 1922 during the last years of King Vajiravudh's reign (figure 4.3). The image of *sao samai* appeared in the advertisement of the *Golden Dragon* cigarettes (*Bangkok kan-mueang*, 4 March 1924, cited in Barmé, 2002, p 49).

Figure 4.3 *Golden Dragon* advertisement (*Bangkok kan-mueang*, March 4, 1924, cited in Barmé, 2002, p 49)

The advertisement illustrates two women with bobbed hairstyle. One of them sits crossed-leg in a chair and the other stands by her. Both women have cigarettes in their hands and the captions say "the taste of freshness to the heart" and "smoking this is much better than other kinds of cigarettes" (Barmé, 2002, p 49). Not only does smoking a cigarette

demonstrate the modern fashion of the West, but this Modern Girl's look in the *Golden Dragon* advertisement completely transformed the image of civilised women that Siamese elite men had promoted in the earlier decades. These women demonstrate confidence, freedom, and modernity through their poses and dialogues. The woman in the advertisement who sits with her legs crossed in the chair would have been considered to be in an unacceptable pose for proper Siamese women. However, the *sao samai*, dressed in Western attire, chooses to act independently in this particular advertisement that emerged in 1924.

Modern Girl images of femininity became popular in Siamese women's magazines in 1925 with the emergence of *Satri thai*, that referred to itself as "the ladies' friend classic weekly" (*Satri thai* March 1, 1925). In fact *Satri thai* was not the first women's magazine in Siam, but it was the first women's weekly to employ graphics and satirical cartoons in its issues. The cover page of the first issue of *Satri thai* of March, 1925 (figure 4.4) demonstrates male criticisms of old Siamese women's fashion and the Modern Girl's fashion. While the traditional Siamese woman on the left was criticised to be "too old fashioned", the image of *sao samai* on the right was described as "new but ugly". *Satri thai* was the first Siamese female magazine that brought out the image of woman with the bobbed hairstyle, make up, and semi-modern clothing. This image of *sao samai* in *Satri thai* demonstrates confidence and sex appeal whenever men lay eyes on her.

Figure 4.4 Satirical cartoon on cover of *Satri thai* magazine (*Satri thai*, March 1, 1925)

Following the trend of *Satri thai,* the icon of Modern Girl (*sao samai*) became increasingly popular towards the end of the absolutist monarchy in 1932. She continued to appear on cover pages of *Nari-nat* (1930) and *Net-nari* (1932), both of which were major women's magazines of the pre-revolutionary years. While *Nari-nat* represented itself as a high-class women's magazine, *Net-nari*'s target group of readers was middle-class women. Although with the difference in their styles, *sao samai* was employed by both magazines. In *Nari-nat,* the *sao samai* illustrates her skill of literacy while preserving the proper image of Siamese women. The image below (figure 4.5) demonstrates three modern girls sharing the read of *Nari-nat* magazine. This image corresponds to the emphasis of the magazine to preserve the elite values of using aristocratic language style and the promotion of domestic skills for women.

Figure 4.5 Cover of *Nari-nat* magazine (*Nari-nat*, February 21, 1931)

Unlike *Nari-nat*, *Net-nari*'s *sao samai* was more appealing in her image as well as the magazine's content. While *Nari-nat* focused on the variety of columns that combined fiction, poetry, news articles, moral teachings, domestic education, and even stories for children, *Net-nari* promoted more radical content that included critiques on marriage law and women's roles in politics through its political articles.

Figure 4.6 *Sao samai* on covers of *Net-nari* (Net-nari October 1, 1933) (left), (*Net-nari*, November 15, 1933) (right)

The above images of *Net-nari* (figure 4.6) illustrate the different character of *sao samai* from what had been seen in *Nari-nat.* The appealing look and posture of *Net-nari's sao samai* illustrate the growing confidence of middle-class Siamese women who were the target group of readers. The fashion copied from the West shows the enhancement in taste of the non-elite women. In other words, *sao samai* in *Net-nari* indicates the rising status of middle-class women by the early 1930s, which completely replaced the popular Victorian era woman of the previous century. Likewise, the notion of *siwilai* that was represented with the aristocratic women influenced by the Victorian era had faded from the society and was replaced by the Modern Girl's concept of modernity. This particular transformation marked the end of the Victorian era's influence in the cultural images of Siamese femininity, which was replaced by the icon of Modern Girl.

The Siamese Modern Girl (*Sao Samai*): What do they want?

The Modern Girl (*sao samai*) in different places in the world express different views and demands. The period between 1925 and 1935, when the Modern Girl became popular in Asia, was a challenging time for many nation states. As the Southeast Asian neighbours struggled with nationalist movements for decolonisation, socioeconomic crisis and cultural transformations, Siam also encountered these matters, which are reflected in the icon of the Siamese Modern Girl. The closest comparison of the Modern Girl in Southeast Asia to the Siamese case would be the study of Burmese *khit kala* (women of the times). The Burmese women of *khit kala,* according to Chie Ikeya's work "Refiguring Women, Colonialism, and Modernity in Burma" (2011), did not only serve as the icon of femininity but also as patriot in the nationalist movement in the anti-colonialist period of the 1920s to 1930s. Similar to the Burmese *khit kala,* the Siamese Modern Girl also

represented femininity in her images with confidence, class, and Western-influenced tastes in fashion, while demanding social freedom in the period leading to the political revolution of 1932. This part of the chapter attempts to further explore the voice of the Siamese Modern Girl during the decline of the absolutist monarchy and the rise of the educated middle class.

Khit kala (women of the times) of Burma demonstrated that they were active in both private and public spheres. In their households, they performed the tasks of both a wife and a mother as well as being active in the public sphere through their participation in women's organisations such as BWA (the Burmese Women's Association) and university boycotts (Ikeya, 2011). While being a wife and a mother, *khit kala* fought for women's rights and anti-colonialism under the nationalist banner. This, in many ways, was similar to the Siamese Modern Girl (*sao samai*), who also began to mark their roles in both domestic and public spheres by the 1920s. The columns on domestic skills had served as the core of women's magazines since the beginning of the women's print media industry in 1900s. Nevertheless, by the reign of King Prajadipok in 1925, the content of these magazines became more political than they had been before. The major topics that were raised in the women's magazines between 1925 and 1935 were demands for gender equality (often relating to the criticism of male polygamous practice); and women's participation in politics. Both issues deserved further detailed discussions.

The voice of Siamese women demanding gender equality by supporting the end of the male practice of polygamy was one of the most popular issues in the women's magazines. The Thai Modern Girl image in the following satirical cartoon (figure 4.7) demonstrates her attitude toward an older man in aristocratic costume who was attracted to

her sex appeal. She enjoyed the male attention but when the aristocratic man tried to touch her, she would not be afraid to respond even with violence.

Figure 4.7 Satirical cartoon *Chuichai oey* (Oh Miss Chuichai) (*Net-nari*, September 15, 1933)

This cartoon illustrates the way Siamese women viewed aristocratic men in the period after the revolution in 1932, when the elites struggled with their position under the new civilian government. The revolution of 24 June 1932 overthrew the absolute monarchy and put a number of Siamese aristocrats in difficult positions. Many of them, including King Prajadipok and Queen Rambhai Barni, had already fled the country in 1933. As a result of the declining position of the elite class and the growing confidence of Siamese women, this cartoon expressed the female view of repulsion toward a womaniser male aristocrat through the icon of Modern Girl. In other words, the Modern Girl raised the voice of women against the polygamous practice of aristocratic male elites. Moreover, the message supporting

woman's right to choose her partner and marriage was also conveyed through Modern Girl in *Satri thai* magazine's cover (figure 4.8).

Figure 4.8 Cover of *Satri thai* magazine (*Satri thai*, June 22, 1925)

This cartoon is set in a local registrar office where Modern Girl, dressed in modern clothes, high heels, and bobbed hair, slaps the face of the male officer. "How old are you now? Why don't you have a husband?" asked the male officer. Modern Girl then replied while slapping his face, "I am here to register for birth and death, not to register for the search of a husband". Once again, the image of Modern Girl demonstrates confidence to respond to the insulting question of Siamese men. She believed in her right to marry or even not to marry. This was another revolutionary aspect of the Siamese Modern Girl that broke away from traditional social expectations. Both of the above satirical cartoons sent the direct message to the readers of these women's magazines that the Modern Girl did not want to be dependent on men.

Apart from the voice of Siamese Modern Girl expressed in supporting gender equality, the demand for women's participation in politics also became a significant issue in *Net nari* women's magazine that was released in 1933, only one year after the revolution. As the result of the People's Party's support of the universal suffrage, the participation of women in the public sphere of politics rose. The images of female candidates for district (*tambon*) election and a female government volunteer for putting down the Baworadej rebellion appeared with the influence of Modern Girl's look in *Net nari* magazine (figures 4.9, 4.10).

Figure 4.9 Candidates for district (*tambon*) election: Miss Thawinwong Somchai (top left); Mrs. Sut Bannasan (bottom left); Mrs. Suwan Patthamarat (top right); Miss Bunlong Manichot (bottom right) (*Net-nari*, September 15, 1933).

All four women who appeared in the image above were candidates of the district election where Siamese women would participate for the first time. The woman candidates wear the same popular perm bobbed hairstyle, influenced by the Modern Girl icon. Although their full dresses are not shown, the top of part of their bodies suggest that these women wore modern blouses. Moreover, this was also the first time that politicised women of commoner backgrounds had their pictures printed in the magazine. Together with this image, the magazine devoted one page describing each of the candidate's brief biography, which emphasised their education and family backgrounds. Although this election was only at the district level and Thailand did not have a female member of the parliament until the 1950s, this evidence demonstrates that the institution of universal suffrage had encouraged women to enter the public sphere of politics right after the revolution in 1932.

4.10 Miss Phanni Thanachan, a young lady from Nakhonsawan Province, who served as a volunteer in putting down the Baworadej rebellion (*Net-nari*, November 15, 1933).

Another image from *Net nari* magazine, of Miss Phanni Thanachan (figure 4.10) was evidence of the Modern Girl's support for women to enter the public sphere. Phanni was a woman volunteer who worked with the army in putting down the movement of the Baworadej rebellion, an elite-led rebel group that wanted to overthrow the People's Party government in October 1933. The story behind this image is particularly interesting for the fact that although Phanni was not from urban areas, she was actively involved with the central government. This was the first time that a Modern Girl was represented in the media as serving as part of the defence of the nation. Similar to the case of Burma, where the *khit kala* took part in nationalist movements in the mid-1920s, the Siamese Modern Girl also earned her role in the public sphere as she showed the ability to help men save the nation from the rebellion. In addition, her Modern Girl's look suggests that femininity had reached out to the provinces of Siam by this time, as Phanni lived in Nakhonsawan Province.

To sum up, while other Asian countries employed the image of the Modern Girl either to serve their nationalist movement in the struggle of colonialism as in Burma, or to enhance their social status as in China or Okinawa, the Siamese Modern Girl (*sao samai*) represented the anti-aristocratic sentiment of the rising middle class in the pre-revolutionary decade before 1932. She demonstrates the voice of the commoner women, which marked the end of the Victorian-era influences that was popular among elite Siamese. By the 1930s, the images of *sao samai* became widely popular alongside the enhanced status of women of all classes in Siamese society as the revolutionary movements were set in motion.

Competition to Define The Appropriate Image of Femininity

The Modern Girl icon is not only a representation of the commoner women's image of femininity, but it also served to stimulate the competition between Siamese women that pre-existed in the field of education. The image of the Modern Girl challenged the civilised (*siwilai*) image of appropriate Siamese aristocratic women by its confidence and criticising voice. While the image of femininity in the absolutist era was associated with the Siamese aristocrats' attempts to emulate the West, the Modern Girl icon represented the modern image of femininity of the rising middle-class women with demands for gender equality. This revolutionary definition of femininity, represented by the Modern Girl, reflected that the competition between the two groups of women extended to the cultural domain of images of appropriate femininity. The following part of this chapter will explore this extended competition between the aristocratic women and commoner elite women in the domain of images of appropriate femininity.

Aristocratic Civilised Lady vs. Commoner Bourgeois Modern Girl

While the Civilised Lady became the model of appropriate Siamese aristocratic women in the late nineteenth century, the Modern Girl icon served to fulfill the image of femininity of commoner women in the crucial transitional years of Siam's politics in the 1920s. This reflected the competition in the cultural domain of images of femininity among the educated women of Siam. While aristocratic women still had limited participation in the public space, middle-class women became more active in their public roles. As a result, the Modern Girl became the model of educated and autonomous Siamese women of the

modern era. Two distinct characteristics of Modern Girl stand out: first is the Modern Girl's confidence in the public sphere, and second is her challenging voice against the aristocrats.

The Modern Girl's confidence in the public sphere, especially her participation in politics as demonstrated earlier, made this icon popular among the bourgeois women of urban Bangkok. Unlike the civilised women of Siam's inner court, who were excluded from public affairs, the Modern Girl was represented outside the domestic sphere. She was an active voice of modern women who demanded gender equality and criticised men's practice of polygamy. In contrast, the image of the Civilised Lady emphasised domestic skills of women. When the revolution took place in 1932, the image of the Modern Girl was appropriated as a proper image of Siamese femininity in the new civilian government as her voice against the aristocratic elites was widespread. At this time, Modern Girl became local politicians (figure 4.9) and a volunteer of the government (figure 4.10) as demonstrated earlier in this chapter. The appearance of the Modern Girl image in the public domains contributed to its popularity as a new cultural image of femininity, which rising commoner women modelled themselves upon. In other words, the definition of femininity in this transitional period had been shaped to allow women to take more public roles than the previous popular Civilised Lady image had promoted. Together with the decline of the aristocratic class in Siam, the Modern Girl icon became more active in making her voice heard, as it will be further demonstrated by the study of women's print media industry in the next chapter.

Conclusion

By the end of the 1920s, the images of femininity represented by Modern Girl icon became popular in the print media industry as they also came to dominate over the Civilised Lady images of Siamese aristocratic women. This chapter has explored the development of the cultural image of femininity from the reign of King Mongkut (Rama IV) to the end of the absolutist monarchy in 1932. The notions of *siwilai* (civilised) and *phudi* (good people), and the significance of the Victorian-era influenced ideologies of domesticity and gentility among the Siamese elites in the absolutist regime prior to 1932 were discussed in relation to the aristocratic image of femininity. The historical evidence of this period demonstrates that aristocratic women adopted these values in order to emulate civilised Westerners. While Siam's age of the Victorian era influence faced its decline by the mid-1920s, the commoner image of femininity emerged with the Modern Girl icon (*sao samai*). This *sao samai* represented a confident woman who would speak for Siamese women on the issues that women could not previously raise their voices on. She criticised the male practice of polygamy and supported women's participation in politics. With their representations and voices in the public sphere, *sao samai* left behind the importance of class backgrounds. As a result, the competition between the two aristocratic and commoner women took place at the beginning of the 1920s and it was the Modern Girl who gained more popularity with her image of modern femininity. This signaled the overall rise of commoner elite women in Siamese society, especially in the post-absolutist sphere, which will be the focus of the following chapters.

Chapter V

The Rise of Women's Print Media: Competing Women's Voices in the Pre-revolutionary Years 1906-1932

Introduction

This chapter aims to explore representations and voices of women in the print media industry from 1906 to 1932. The gradual development of women's magazines in Siam had begun as early as the end of the nineteenth century when men were behind the production of most early women's magazines. As a result, the male representations of female voices will also be included in this chapter in discovering the early stage of women's magazines. Then, the period of class conflict between the aristocratic and commoner women's magazines of 1925 to 1932 will be discussed as actual voices of women that rose in the pre-revolutionary years. With the wider access to education available to urban Siamese women, the print media industry had witnessed a period of rising voices of women by the pre-revolutionary years of the 1920s. In this flourishing period for women's magazines, as many as ten magazines were published with the purpose of entertaining and educating the targeted female readers (Ubonwan & Uayphon, 1989). However, the number of women's magazines had declined by the beginning of the 1930s due to the global economic crisis and the internal political instability caused by the revolution of 1932. Between 1932 and 1933, many of the women's magazines were banned for their political critiques and others were shut down because of the financial difficulty

faced by the publishers. Nonetheless, this period offers evidence of the early feminist movements in Siam, which reflect in the women's magazines during the most critical period of social and political transitions.

Early women's magazines: In the reigns of Rama V and VI

The first evidence of a female-oriented magazine was dated back in 1888. Prince Chaiyantamongkon (born 1865, died 1907), founder of *Nari rom* (women's entertainment), was a son of King Mongkut (Rama IV). This magazine was released every fortnight and proved to be short-lived for its production stopped after only one year (Ubonwan & Uayphon, 1989). Although the original copies of the magazine could not be located at the National Library of Thailand, previous studies suggested that this magazine used a high level of poetic language and most writers were men of the Siamese court (Ubonwan & Uayphon, 1989). Whether this magazine was really aimed at the female audience or was only for the leisure of the aristocratic men is unclear. Nevertheless, a more apparent version of women's magazine appeared in 1906 from Thianwan, who was one of the most progressive male writers at the time (Copeland, 1993, Barmé, 2002). His four series of guidebooks for women, *Bamrung-nari*, were released in response to the growing number of girl's schools in Siam. These volumes comprised, first, guides for prenatal care, second, guides for child care, third, guides for teenage girls, and fourth, guides for young housewives (Thianwan in *Bamrung-nari*, 1906, p 8-9). Given that Thianwan's works were often regarded as critical, it was the first time that any writers raised the issue about gender equality to the public audience as he did in the following statement,

> The position of Siamese women these days is degrading in many aspects but the worst condition is in the marriage law (*kot-mai laksana phua-mia*). Men have been taking advantage of women...and they are sometimes seen as buffalos that can be sold to anybody at any time (Thianwan in *Bamrung-nari*, 1906, p 5).

The above statement demonstrates Thianwan's initiative to challenge the social perspective on Siamese women. The lack of female education allowed men to take advantage of women. The example of the Siamese marriage law was made in order to demonstrate the inequality between men and women. As a result, the author called for the promotion of good guidance for women in order to enhance women's status. Although the four issues of *Bamrung-nari* were written by a male author, they serve as major evidence for the awareness of gender inequality in urban Siamese society of the early twentieth century.

Another magazine that emerged during the reign of King Chulalongkorn was *Kunlasatri* (1906). "Ladies of good birth and breeding", the meaning of this magazine's title, demonstrates its promotion of aristocratic values (Barmé, 2002, p 26). Given that by 1906 the number of literate Siamese women was still concentrated among the aristocrats, *Kunlasatri* aimed at them as the target audience. Apart from the two women's magazines mentioned above, *Satri niphon* was also released in 1914, in the reign of King Vajiravudh. Although *Satri niphon* emerged eight years after *Kunlasatri,* its content and styles are very similar. This could be because both were representing female voices by a group of aristocratic male writers, which will be explored in the following part.

Male Representations of Female Voices

Rather than defining the emergence of two early Siamese women's magazines *Kunlasatri* and *Satri Niphon* as the 'first feminist movement' comparable to those in the West, Barmé suggests it was more of a 'self-defining process' kind of feminism, "in which the emphasis is not so much on the 'rights' per se, but rather on the women seeking the "freedom to discover their own sphere or destiny" (Barmé, 2002 p 18). I will have to disagree with Barmé at the point where he believed that the mentioned magazines demonstrated that the women were actually involved in the discovery of 'their own sphere'. While *Kunlasatri* and *Satri niphon* were promoted by aristocratic men, there was hardly any evidence of the involvement of female writers apart from the pen names of some authors that sounded more feminine than others. Because before Siam's first comprehensive press act of 1923, newspapers editors/owners did not have to reveal their names, it was difficult to determine if these magazines had brought out the true female voices in the issues they had released (Copeland, 1993). Moreover, with the evidence that male elites were behind the production of these magazines, the actual female voice might never have had its space in the mentioned media at all. Further content analysis will reveal that these magazines were tools for men to affirm their dominance among the literate women of Siam.

For *Kunlasatri*, we only know that *Luang* Chan and *Luang* Wikhanet, both male royal servants, promoted the emergence of this magazine (Barmé, 2002). The names of the writers were anonymous and the editors clearly stated that it was their intentions not to reveal the author' names. Despite the unclear gender of the authors, it is nonetheless evident that *Kunlasatri* supported women voices to be included in its issues. Chanthramat, the editor in chief of *Kunlasatri,* opened up opportunities for female students to submit

their writings for publications by stating in the editor's message of the first issue that, "all female schools are regarded as owners of this magazine who have the full right to express their opinions and make announcements in this magazine" (Chanthramat in *Kunlasatri*, 1906, p 9). Despite this annoucement, there were still doubts about the identity of the author. The same author defended his position by reaffirming that there was involvement by real women in the publication of the magazine,

> For those who doubt that this magazine is not from the voices of real women, it can only be because you have not seen such brave women before. You might not have socialised with these female students and they might have come to you as a surprise. In fact, I have already declared in the previous issue that articles in this magazine are written by both men and women. In leaving this task to the women and having only stories by women, they might not be able to keep up with the writing and the readers might get bored. (Chanthramat in *Kunlasatri*, 1906, p 68).

The statement by Chanthramat was contradictory. On one hand, the author was being proactive about the female position but, on the other hand, an ambiguous attitude towards the women in handling the task of writing (without men) was also expressed.

A number of stories in *Kunlasatri* focus on the roles of a 'good woman', while poetry was still the major component of the magazine. Teachings and guidance provided to the readers through the columns demonstrate the dominant voice of males rather than the voices of women. In the article "Roles of Women" (*nathi khong ying*) by Sangwanphet, the author suggested that women deserve a certain level of education, as they have to look after their households. Basic learning skills including literacy (equal to men up to secondary level), sewing, arts, healthcare/nursing, civil regulations, and foreign languages should be

offered to women in the modernising era (Sangwanphet in *Kunlasatri*, 1906, p 12-13). Although the article represents the author as a female, who sends a message to males in calling for their support in female education, it was intended for the benefit of men. In other words, Sangwanphet used this article to persuade female readers to fulfill their expected roles in order to make suitable partners. Another article "Administration" (*kan-pokkhrong*) by Kratai-nai-wong-duean also offers teachings for women. As women were no longer regarded as passive housewives, the author promoted the qualities of mother of the household (*mae-ruean*). The author encouraged women to enhance their skills in running their households by involving more than domestic skills, such as organisational skill in finance, basic nursing skills, ability to give a basic education to children, and social and interpersonal skills (Kratai-nai-wong-duean in *Kunlasatri*, 1906, pp 135-162). The author expressed guidance for women in a similar manner to Sangwanphet, that women of good birth (*kunlasatri*) were to acquire all of these skills mentioned. As the given expectations are high, it is difficult to imagine that a woman would be writing this article. The element of women's independence did not exist in these articles. They rather concentrate on male expectations of females, hence the promotion of women's qualities. Once again, the writers of *Kunlasatri* were speaking from the voice of men and the process where women were in fact seeking the "freedom to discover their own sphere" still remained an open question. Even when another female magazine, *Satri niphon*, emerged in 1914, males still asserted their domination in representing the voice of women (Barmé, 2002 p 18).

Satri niphon was another magazine that did not reveal the names of the owner or the editorial team members and only a few issues of this magazine can be located at the National Library of Thailand. The language style of the magazine still followed the pattern similar to *Kunlasatri*. However, *Satri niphon* included a number of short stories in its issues,

which highlighted its distinction from the previous female magazines and launched a modern style for other magazines to follow in the next period. Nonetheless, *Satri niphon* also offered educational columns for women that reflected the assertion of the voice of males similar to *Kunlasatri* magazine. Although the magazine represents the voice of a group of women, as *Satri niphon*'s direct translation is 'female writers', the identities of the authors are once again unknown. In the first issue, the editorial team discussed the rise in the level of literacy of Siamese females while the woman's print media were still limited. In addition, these editors also raised the issue of identity of the writers of Siamese female magazines,

> In a foreign country such as China, women have already owned and written magazines. It is a pity that women in Siam do not have the opportunities to do the same. As a consequence, some male writers took the titles of *mae* ['mother'] in order to mock the women (Khana Satri niphon in *Satri niphon*, 1914, p 4).

The statement above demonstrates that the editors of *Satri niphon* were well aware of doubts the readers had regarding the identities of other female magazines' authors as sometimes they were men disguised in women's pennames. Although many columns of *Satri niphon* expressed concerns of women more than the mere guidance given in *Kunlasatri*, the unknown identities could not confirm that it had truly brought out the voices of Siamese women.

Evidence of male domination in *Satri niphon* is seen in the article "Roles of Wives" (*nathi khong phanraya*) by an anonymous author. The list of twenty rules[13] applied for the

[13] The 20 rules for good housewives: (i) Look after the domestic wellbeing as well as all servants; (ii) Love and be loyal to the husband in time of sickness; (iii) Be economical with the household spending; (iv) Be diligent in the household and always make the husband happy; (v) Never get angry with the husband and

practice of a good wife in this article guided women to have a good keeping of the household as well as to treasure and respect their husbands more than any other people ("Roles of Wives" in *Satri niphon*, 1914, pp 128-131). The author expressed concerns that misbehaving wives could lead to the failure of the husbands' careers and the wellbeing of the family. As it can be seen, the twenty rules were written to benefit men rather than to improve the status of women, which the magazine claims to promote. Moreover, the unidentified name of the author remains a question for readers of this article. The similar voice of an anonymous author was expressed in another article "Problems of Female Education" (*panha rueang kan sueksa khong satri*). The topic of women and education was raised in the first issue of *Satri niphon* for the first time in the public print media in this period. Three questions were raised: i) should women receive education? ii) should women study the general education using the same curriculum as men? iii) should women pursue higher education and should they be able to study in the same fields as men? ("Problems of Female Education" in *Satri niphon*, 1914, p 153). The anonymous author raised several points for discussion of the public opinion on female education into this article. One of the concerns was that a number of Siamese still shared the idea that education could make women become arrogant and over-confident. Another discussion aimed to answer the second question about the general education for women. The author advised that Siamese female students should not be required to study the same secondary school curriculum as male students at this stage as there were still fewer jobs that accepted women. Nonetheless, the author had concluded that opportunities for an equal education to men, especially at the

---

solve the problems rationally; (vi) Be helpful to the husband's tasks; (vii) Never accuse the husband. Be persuasive with the suggestions given to him; (viii) Respect and never look down to the husband; (ix) Never keep secrets from the husband; (x) Always be honest to the husband; (xi) Never let other people take care of the husband because of your laziness; (xii) Give special care and attention to the husband when he is sick; (xiii) Must see the husband as being better than all other men; (xiv) Never talk about the husband behind his back; (xv) Never say anything sarcastic to the husband; (xvi) Look after the children as a way to share the heavy task of the husband; (xvii) Never get too close to other men; (xviii) Never leave the husband in time of troubles; (xix) Never quarrel with the husband; (xx) Always be self-conscious.

higher level, should be considered available in the near future. However, women should not take over male roles in the society as it was still considered to be inappropriate for women to take men's jobs ("Problems of Female Education" in *Satri niphon*, 1914). From this article, the readers could observe the ambivalent position of the author regarding the growing number of literate females. On one hand, the author saw the importance of female education, but on the other hand, this anonymous writer suggested that it should be limited so that women would not become too arrogant. In other words, this article serves as evidence to suggest the author's intention was to control literate women's position under the domination of men.

The comparison of the two early female magazines, *Kunlasatri* (1906) and *Satri niphon* (1914), demonstrates that the woman's voice had achieved an enhanced place in the Siamese print media by the reign of King Vajiravudh. Although the identities of the writers of *Satri niphon* were unknown, their articles tended to offer limited freedom to bring their concerns into their own sphere. Still, *Satri niphon* did not yet fully grant freedom for the women discover their sphere.

Moreover, *Satri niphon* also reflected the Victorian period influence that had been popular among the elites since the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V). The short story "Modern Women" *(sao samai-mai)*, which appeared in the first issue of *Satri Niphon*, is about a young lady of teenage years, Phachuen, who came to visit her grandmother during her school holiday ("Modern Women" in *Satri niphon*, 1914). Phachuen was portrayed as a woman who was curious, confident, and full of energy. The highlight of this story is the conversation between Phachuen and her grandmother about female education and the values of modern women. Two women from two different generations exchanged their viewpoints. Phachuen had shared with her grandmother her passion for dancing, theatre,

and fashion of the modern urban life in Bangkok. She said that these cultural pursuits would bring the nation to civilisation (*siwilai*). The story ended when Phachuen left the house in her most modern costume to see a play. This story demonstrates the apparent Victorian period influence reflected in the lifestyle of modern women of the era through the character of Phachuen. She represented the image of a civilised Siamese woman. In addition, the article advises women on the latest fashion ("Dressing Style" [*kan taeng-tua*] in *Satri niphon*, 1914). This column was the first fashion column to appear in a women's magazine and would continue to be one of the essential columns in the magazines of the following decades. Fashion had come to be represented as part of the lifestyle of modern elite women of the 1910s.

Women in Defence of the Nation

The status of women in national affairs highlighted the difference between *Satri niphon* and *Kunlasatri*. The succession of King Vajiravudh to the throne in 1910 came with his awareness of the growing print media, which brought new ideas from abroad to the urban literate (Barmé, 2002). While trying his best to establish his absolutist rule following the path of his late father Chulalongkorn, the new king employed the notion of 'nation, religion, and king' as the core of Siam's progression toward civilisation. The promotion of woman warriors in *Satri niphon* was in accord with the king's policy. The article "Do Not Underestimate Women" (*ya pramat satri*) commemorates three remarkable woman warriors: Queen Suriyothai: *Thao* Thepkrasatri; and *Thao* Sisunthon ("Do Not Underestimate Women" in *Satri niphon*, 1914). All three heroines have defended their community from the Burmese invasions together with men or even without the leadership of men. Queen Suriyothai had died in the battle in the defense of her husband from the

enemy attack while *Thao* Thepkrasatri and *Thao* Sisunthon had fought to save the city of Thalang (now called Phuket) when its governor, the late husband of *Thao* Thepkrasatri, suddenly passed away during the war. Both sisters commanded the battle with bravery and saved the city without male leadership ("Do Not Underestimate Women" in *Satri niphon*, 1914). It was the first time that the public print commemorated woman warriors in such an independent way. Does this mean that women had been included in the image of national defence? Barmé suggested that the emphasis on female involvement in warfare or 'the masculine domain' claims 'a space of significance for women' and 'some sort of parity or equality between women and men' (Barmé, 2002, p 35). *Satri niphon* had successfully revived memories of these warriors in the most suitable circumstance and well corresponded to the state's policy. Not only could women now be seen in the masculine sphere of warfare, they were also expected to perform the task of men during the difficult times. In other words, *Satri niphon* had affirmed the representation of women in the national scheme. Siamese women were, for the first time, seen outside the domestic sphere.

The Real Voice of Women: *Watthana Witthaya* Magazine (1909)

The first genuine voice of women appeared in *Watthana witthaya* magazine as early as 1897 (Tat, 1974). The group of American missionaries had established a printing house in 1892 and published a daily Thai-language newspaper called *Day Break* (saeng-arun). Nevertheless, the publication of *Day Break* was transferred to the missionary girls' school, Watthana Academy, in 1897 and changed its name to *Watthana witthaya* magazine (figure 5.1). Miss Cole, the headmistress, and a Thai teacher, Miss Tat Prathipasen, transformed the magazine to serve as a voice of female students of Watthana School. Each of the issues was comprised of approximately fifty pages of a variety of articles, for example, bible

teachings, biographies, poems, and educational articles on history, art, literature, and domestic skills of arts and crafts. Besides the writings of Watthana Academy's teachers and students, many of the articles were translated from English (Tat, 1974). This aspect of the magazine drew interest from readers outside the school community. The general secretary of the Ministry of Education had expressed his keen interest to Miss Cole, to distribute the magazines to publicly funded girls' schools, of which he was in charge, but the proposal failed just before the revolution in 1932.

Figure 5.1 Cover of *Watthana witthaya* magazine 1911 (Watthana Academy Library)

The available volumes of *Watthana witthaya* magazine, which can be located at the Watthana School in Bangkok, are dated back to 1909. The twelve volumes expressed the uniqueness in the voice of women of Watthana community. The magazine pointed out the more advanced perspectives of the authors than other magazines previously mentioned, in

its attempts to widen the female vision in the exploration of the Western world. First, the import of foreign news was an innovative step of *Watthana witthaya* magazine. Political news from different parts of the world was frequently followed and reported in the magazine: for example, the revolution in Turkey, the political transformation of Persia toward constitutional monarchy, and the introduction of the Duma in Russia. All of these news articles shared the promotion of constitutional monarchy, the popular topic among the Victorian era gentlemen of Siam in the same period. *Watthana witthaya* magazine had gone beyond the male-dominant boundary, seen in the earlier female magazines such as *Kunlasatri* and *Satri niphon*, by bringing up topics on political affairs to the female audience. In addition, biographies of Western notable women were also translated from the English articles and included in the issues of *Watthana Witthaya* magazine, for example, a biography of Mrs. Taft (born 1857, died 1930), wife of William Taft, who was elected as the president of the United States from 1909 to 1913 and 1921-1930. The article "Obligations for Women" (*kit satri samrap satri)* portrayed Mrs. Taft as a good model for women of the era in having good interpersonal skills as well as the domestic skills of a housewife ("Obligations for Women" in *Watthana witthaya*, 1909).

The second attempt to widen the female vision was travel diaries. The travel diaries included in *Watthana witthaya* magazine engendered a new style of documentary writing that had never existed in earlier female magazines. Miss Suwan, a Thai teacher of Watthana School, wrote in the article "Journey to Chiangmai" (*raya thang Chiangmai*) about her experiences in traveling from Bangkok to Chiangmai in the north of Thailand (Suwan in *Watthana witthaya*, 1909). She started her journey in Bangkok by train and continued from Nakhonsawan to Chiangmai by boat. Along the way, she described the environment, the people, and even the comparison between her experiences abroad and the in-country

journey. Miss Suwan wrote "the beautiful flower garden here never bores me…it reminds me of the garden in Japan" (Suwan in *Watthana witthaya*, 1909, p 214). Suwan demonstrated not only her observations of the journey but also the comparison of her experiences abroad to the audience. Another travel diary was written by Miss Arun, who studied early childhood education in the United States. Her experiences in attending the training course in the United States is shared in this article "Journey to the United States" (*raya thang pai prathet amerika)* (Arun in *Watthana witthaya*, 1909). Arun gave a clear vision and inspiration for female students of Watthana School to pursue their education abroad. She finished her postgraduate study from Connecticut and came back to establish the early childhood program at Watthana School with the support of the headmistress, Miss Cole. Apart from being one of the earliest Siamese women who went to study abroad, Arun also served as the inspiration and pride of Watthana community.

The final aspect that highlights the distinction of *Watthana witthaya* magazine from the other male-dominated women's magazines of the early period is the critiques it offered on the use of English terms in modern Thai language. The use of the term 'civilise' (*siwilai*) was criticised in one of the issues as a misinterpreted term. The author argued that the use of this adopted English term in Thai language mostly referred to beautiful (*ngam*) and progress (*charoen*). However, the direct translation of the term relates to the stage of social, cultural and moral advancement, which had developed as a break away from barbarianism ("New Term" in *Watthana witthaya*, 1909). The author corrected that the use of the term is inappropriate to the current situation of Siam and advised that 'progress' (*charoen*) is a more suitable term. Given that English learning was the strength of Watthana School, this article demonstrated a great confidence in the women's voice. It was something more innovative than other explored female magazines in the same era.

Although the teachers of Watthana Academy rather than the students wrote most articles in the volume of 1909, they were the real voices of females without the interference of men. This gave a great encouragement to the literate Watthana women to take part in the Siamese journalism industry as well as inspiring young female writers in the following era.

The Voice of Women in Print Media 1925-1932: Competition between Aristocratic Women and Commoner Women

During the First World War, women's magazines seemed to have disappeared from the Siamese public. *Watthana witthaya,* the school magazine run by Watthana Academy, was the only one that survived, simply because it had a firm supporting community of students, parents, and the alumni. Apart from this magazine, Siamese readers did not see any publications of women's magazines again until 1925, which brought back the boom in the print media industry. The period between 1925 and 1933 was the most flourishing period for the publications of women's magazines. From the records at the National Library of Thailand, there were as many as ten magazines that emerged during the decade before the revolution in 1932. However, only six of the women's magazines from the period can be viewed as some original hard copies and microfilms were ruined or have been lost. The six magazines were: *Satri-thai*[14] (1925), *Nari-nithet*[15] (1926), *Nari-khasem*[16] (1926), *Suphap-nari*[17] (1930), *Nari-nat*[18] (1931), and *Net-nari* (1932).[19] By looking through these magazines, the demanding voice of women to improve

[14] Thai Women
[15] Women's News
[16] The Complete Woman
[17] Gentlewomen
[18] In Support of Women
[19] Women's Vision

their social status emerged and this could be considered as the first feminist movement, which will be discussed in the following part of this chapter.

First Siamese Feminist Movement

Prior to 1925, the women's magazines were mostly written by men or were suspiciously written under the influence of men i.e. *Bamrung-nari* (1906), *Kunlasatri* (1906), and *Satri-niphon* (1914). Nonetheless, a number of women's magazines that emerged in the decade before the revolution of 1932 seemed to be the works of actual women. Barmé's argument of the first feminist movement in Siam where he claimed it was more of the process where women sought "freedom to discover their own sphere or destiny" (Barmé, 2002 p 18) rather than the Western kind of feminist movement, would fit in the framework of rising voices of literate Siamese women in this period. Before exploring the details and content of the women's magazines in the period between 1925 and 1932, the new styles that these magazines introduced to the development of Siamese print media will be commented upon first.

The women's magazines in the pre-revolutionary years employed different methods to express their concerns and ideas to the public. One of them is the introduction of prose fiction as a major component of their volumes. They became the best means for the authors to convey the message to the readers. These works of fiction also sometimes expressed women's concerns about their social status and even project their desires of how they want to be represented in the society. Barmé (2002) had mentioned the popular prose fiction *Chom Chori* (The Female Bandit Leader), published in *Suphap-nari*, as an example of the new image of dynamic women (Sichan in *Suphap-nari*, 1931). The leading character of the story was a female bandit leader, Sichan, who was rough and confident even when she

encountered men. This prose fiction attempts "to portray a Siamese (as opposed to a Western) female character in marked contrast to the stereotypical indigenous view of women as the 'weaker sex' (*phet on-ae*) who lacked courage and decisiveness" (Barmé, 2002, p 201). Another example of prose fiction with a message that concerned women is "The Devil Marriage" (*wiwa pisat*) in *Nari-nithet* (*Mae* Chusi in *Nari-nithet*, 1926), which portrayed the life of a young woman who was betrayed by a man. Banyen, the leading character, was an educated young lady who fell in love with a married man. She was telling her story as a way to teach other women to learn from her own mistake. Moreover, the voice of Banyen in this story represents a confident and educated urban female Bangkokian who was not afraid to share her story with other women (*Mae* Chusi in *Nari-nithet*, 1926). These articles of prose fiction were newly adopted tools for the writers to send their messages to female readers and they became the popular component in the women's magazines in this period.

Another new style that can be observed is the emergence of the genre of a hybrid magazine format that combines both the newspaper's format and magazine-styled columns found in the women's magazines of the pre-revolutionary years (Ubonwan & Uayphon, 1989). When earlier magazines tended to mainly promote the roles of women through poetry and prose writings, the magazines in the late 1920s incorporated news content in their issues. While prose fiction and other articles on domestic arts were still the major components of the magazines, social news and foreign news were often reported. Reports of the formation of Siam Women's Society (*samakhom*) and female participants in local politics and government in both *Nari-nat* and *Net-nari* were evidence of early Siamese feminist movements. The news content had stimulated the literate Siamese women to participate in the public sphere. This widened the opportunities for educated urban middle-

class women to join the literate society of print media. Yet the voice of women in the pre-revolutionary years was not a monolithic one. They were the voices that had been divided by the two groups of women: the aristocratic women (who were associated with royal titles and royal affiliations); and the literate commoner women. The publications of these two groups of literate women will be the focus of study in the following part.

Elite Voices in *Nari-khasem* (1926) and *Nari-nat* (1930)

The female literacy rate of Siam had risen by the mid-1920s. The official statistics of 235,465 female students enrolled in schools of Siam in 1925 demonstrated the improved access to education for women (Barmé, 2002, p 153). This was an enormous increase from a decade earlier, in which 5,396 girls were recorded to have attended schools (Barmé, 2002, p 153). Although the statistics spoke for the whole country, the number of literate women was concentrated within Bangkok and the nearby provinces where the growing bourgeois class and the aristocrats dominated the socio-political conditions. As the reading public was expanding, the first female group who took the brave step to start the first production of a female magazine without the male influence was the aristocratic women. These elite women were born with royal affiliations and received their training in literacy and domestic skills within the royal court. The works of noble women are reflected in the emergence of two magazines: *Nari-khasem* and *Nari-nat* in 1926 and 1930, respectively.

Figure 5.2 *Nari-khasem*'s first issue in 1926 with the list of the all female-editorial team (*Nari-khasem* October 1, 1926)

Nari-khasem was published every ten days with a noble lady, Sawat Siriwong, as the chief editor (figure 5.2). The message of the editors from the first issue clearly stated that everybody in the editorial team is female, and the magazine only serves the purpose of entertainment. They had no intention to discuss politics, as it was inappropriate for women to do so (Bannathikanrini in *Nari-khasem*, 1926). Nevertheless, literary works that did not associate with politics were seen from a rather more active perspective. The editors encouraged all women to support the literary works of women as they were far behind the men's (Bannathikanrini in *Nari-khasem*, 1926). As a result, the magazine did not offer critiques or concerns of the women's status as much as the non-elite produced magazines, which will be investigated in the next part of this chapter.

Apart from articles on domestic skills, which the magazine upheld as the priority of a woman's qualitie: items translated from English fiction were the major component of

Nari-khasem magazine. "Danger of a Young Woman" (*phai khong ying-sao*) was a love story translated from the English prose fiction that appeared in the first issue of the magazine in 1926. The story was about a young educated woman, Gloria, whose family's financial constraints had pushed her to look for a job where she ended up working as a personal assistant of Mrs. Denison. Both characters travelled from London to Monte Carlo, in the south of France where Mrs. Denison attended her social events. The image of Monte Carlo was portrayed as a place of all vices. Gloria, as an innocent young lady, had never been exposed to the danger of these vices and more importantly, the rich men of Monte Carlo (Khrueawan in *Nari-khasem*, 1926). This translated prose fiction sent out a warning message to women while bringing out the Victorian era values of the Siamese aristocrats to the readers. The European setting and the upscale poetic language style, comparable to elite male writers' works, complemented the reputation of *Nari-khasem* as a high-class fictional magazine (*banthoeng-khadi chan-sung*) (Ubonwan & Uayphon, 1989, p 19). In addition, the vocabulary, style, and imported content of *Nari-khasem* was also intentionally projected at the readers with high literacy skills.

While the rising middle-class literate women had challenged the aristocrats with their publications, another group of noble women introduced a new style of elite-founded magazine in *Nari-nat* in 1930. Many authors of *Nari-nat* were women of the elite background, such as Princess Phunphitsamai (born 1895, died 1990) and Buppha Nimmanhemin (born 1905, died 1963), daughters of Prince Damrong and *Phraya* Thewet Wongwiwat, respectively. Both were aristocratic women who became successful authors in the post-absolutist era. Moreover, *Nari-nat* also included articles written by men, which contributed to the credibility of the magazine than the all-female writers. Nevertheless, the most innovative aspect of this magazine is the diversity of articles that combined fiction,

poetry, news articles, moral teachings, domestic knowledge, and even stories for children. Hence, *Nari-nat* tended to widen its readership by its variety of articles.

Although *Nari-nat* attempted to preserve its elite character by using aristocratic language style and promoting domestic skills for women, the early feminist movements were found throughout available issues from 1931 to 1932, just before the magazine was shut down due to its financial difficulty. The article "How Should We Call Our Spouses?" (*rao khuan riak khukhrong khong rao wa yang rai di?*) by the author with the initials Por. Cho., whose gender could not be determined, is an example of the call for concern regarding women's equality. The article addressed the social issue of how man and wife should address each other. As the author had observed, there were several ways people used to address their spouses i.e. men called their wives as: mother (*mae*); younger sister (*nong* or *nu*); or by names/titles (*khunying*), and vice versa wives called their husbands with different titles such as father (*pho*); Mr. (*nai*); elder brother (*phi*); or names/titles (*chaokhun*) (Por. Cho. in *Nari-nat*, 1931). At the end of the article, the author persuaded the audience to use the word 'husband' (*sami*) and 'wife' (*phanraya*) to demonstrate sincerity and avoid confusion as well as to promote equality between men and women.

Another evidence of the early feminist movement was in the article "Society" (*samakhom*), where the formation of Women's Society was called to the readers' attention. The author, like the previous one, used a penname, Phitsawong ('amaze'), in this article. Although the identity is unknown, the way the author communicated to the readers was as if a woman writer was calling for support from other women. In one part of the article, the author wrote:

> As a way to get out of the domestic sphere, women should regard this Women's Society as a 'school' (*rong-rian*) where women can exchange knowledge and experiences, not a place to gossip as men might have thought (Phitsawong in *Nari-nat*, 1931, p 14).

The sarcasm toward men was apparent in this statement. The author was apparently aware of men's criticisms and was placing high hopes on the support of literate women in the official formation of the first Women's Society.

Yet the advancement of women's magazines was not confined only within the aristocratic groups of Siamese, unlike in the late nineteenth century when access for women to education was still limited.[20] In the mid-1920s, non-aristocratic women in urban areas already had access to education and developed their literacy level equal to the noble elites. Therefore, the voices of these literate commoner women need to be further explored as a separate voice of women, which demonstrated even stronger evidence of the early Siamese feminist movements.

Discovering Voices of Commoner Women

Between 1925 and 1932, a number of middle-class women's magazines emerged and three of them stood out for their unique feminist voices: *Satri-thai* (1925), *Net-nari* (1932), and *Ying thai* (1932). These magazines represented themselves as the voices of middle-class women rather than women of the high class as seen in *Nari-khasem* (1926) and *Nari-nat* (1930), which focused more on fiction and upscale literary styles. On the contrary, the three non-elite female magazines offered political critiques and openly brought up social concerns for women in the way that none of the earlier female magazines

[20] See Chapter III *Early Female Education: 1870-1910.*

had done before. Their pivotal role in serving as feminist voices is a revolutionary aspect of the representations of women prior to the arrival of the dramatic political reform in 1932. Non-aristocratic women were, for the first time, active in the public sphere. Their voices, in the mentioned women's magazines, reaffirmed the progress of Siamese feminist movements.

Satri thai was one of the most innovative magazines at the time it was first published in 1925. Given that the editorial team members were female commoners, the magazine gave insights into women's thoughts in the way that the elite could not have done. The goal of the magazine was to "enlighten all women" (*hai khwam sawang kae satri thang puang*) (Ubonwan & Uayphon, 1989, p 17). From this motto, the editors had demonstrated their intention to eliminate class barriers among literate Siamese urbanites. As the result, the magazine brought up topics that were more dynamic than other magazines in the same era, i.e. the articles on marriage law, women and politics and women's social status.

The Siamese readers did not get a chance to see such dynamic voice of women again until the early 1930s, just before the revolution that overthrew the absolutist monarchy. Barmé stated that "*Ying Thai* represented the last feminist type newspaper to appear in Siam during the pre-World War II period" (Barmé, 2002, p 218). He has overlooked *Net-nari* (women's vision), another female magazine that demonstrated the bold progress of the Siamese feminist movement. *Net-nari* was issued every fortnight and was owned and run by a group of commoner women. Emerging in the era when politics became a sensitive issue, *Net-nari* took a bold step, similar to what *Satri-thai* attempted to do, to discuss political issues and woman's equality. These middle-class women's magazines will be the focus of the following part of this chapter.

Feminist Voices in Demanding Women's Equality in *Satri-thai* (1925) and *Net-nari* (1932)

The efforts to promote gender equality in the volumes of *Satri-thai* and *Net-nari* are key evidence of the feminist movement, in which women sought political rights and freedom. *Satri-thai* had brought up the topic of women's inequality in marriage from its first issue. Miss Banchong expressed approval that the women's positions in the 'advanced civilised countries' (*araya-prathet thi charoen*) had progressed toward gender equality with the marriage law that enforced monogamy (Banchong in *Satri thai*, 1925). The author went on to complain that the Siamese marriage law (*kotmai laksana phua-mia*) was outdated and that it often caused humiliation to women as they did not have the respect they deserved from men. Although marriage registration was already introduced in the reign of King Vajiravudh, it was only regulated among the bureaucrats and not among the commoners. In order to improve the status of women in Siamese society, Miss Banchong suggested the immediate reform of the marriage law (Banchong in *Satri thai*, 1925, p 21). The promotion of the marriage regulation reform became a central issue in *Satri-thai* in 1926 when a new column, "The Explanation of the Marriage Law" (*kham athibai kotmai phua-mia*), had introduced to specifically educate women to the better understanding of the Siamese marriage law. The aim of this column was to elaborate the rights and responsibilities of women in marriage as Siamese women had only limited knowledge of civil law (Wo. So. Nethibandit in *Satri thai*, 1926). The column had introduced its female readers to the basic explanation of civil marriage and the rights of women in marriage, such as the right to declare annulment when their husbands cheat or threaten them. From the evidence mentioned, *Satri-thai* proved itself to be the true feminist voice in calling for the promotion of equality for women. While the Siamese females were excluded from legal studies, *Satri-*

thai took the bold step to educate its female readers. Critiques, leading to the end of polygamy, were raised openly for the first time in the women's magazine.

Net-nari in 1933 continued to criticize the practice of polygamy in the article "Should Thai Men Have Only One Wife?" (*chai thai khuan mi mia khon diaw?*) by Phrikthai, which followed the latest news from the parliament regarding the potential reform in the marriage law (Phrikthai in *Net-nari*, 1933). The author believed that this change could enhance the status of the Siamese women who had been taken advantage of by men, as can be seen in the following statement:

> Now, what should the women, who were one of the many wives of men, do?...Women should have respect in their female dignity. We always care for others but never once care for ourselves. When this law code is completed, women will learn to care more for themselves and value themselves...(Phrikthai in *Net-nari*, 1933, p 7-8)

Although the marriage law that ended polygamy was introduced only in 1935, two years after this article was published, the author had demonstrated a dynamic female voice of concern to the public sphere. The critique of her statement above called for women to exercise their rights and value themselves. These examples, therefore, highlight the apparent feminist movement in *Net-nari* and *Satri-thai* during the revolutionary years of the early 1930s.

Apart from the critiques on the marriage law, *Net-nari* also promoted the pivotal voice of the women in the public male-dominated sphere such as politics and government. Political articles demonstrated the most dynamic aspect of these non-elite female magazines. *Net-nari* had demonstrated its political expressions in the article "That Which Cannot Be Chosen" (*sing thi lueak mai dai*). The article challenged the traditional

perception of male and female roles, which had framed that politics was a task of men, women were expected to perform the tasks at home as *mia* (wife) and *mae* (mother). As the politics of men progressed at the dawn of the revolution, the author wrote in a rather sarcastic voice in this article by saying that "we (women) should accept to only be a good wife and mother as they (men) claim that we cannot do anything else" (Suphap-satri *in Net-nari*, 1932, p 5). The political content of *Net-nari* continued to play a significant role especially after the revolution in June 1932. The article "Women as District Representatives" (*suphapsatri pen phu-thaen tambon*) encouraged women to participate in the district representative election that was going to be held in September 1933. The author was confident that women could also help men lead the country (Loetkrai in *Net-nari*, 1933). Female candidates and their brief biographies with photographs were advertised in the magazine under the column "Interview" (*samphat*) by Khana. Four women were interviewed and admired for their participation in politics for the first time in Siam. The candidates were: Bunlong Manichot from Samutsakhon Province; Suwan Patthamarat from Bangkok; Thawinwong Somchai from Bangkok; and Suthisan Winitchai from Bangkok (Khana in *Net-nari*, 1933). This was the first time that the print industry witnessed such a pivotal role of female magazines in the promotion of women's participation in politics.

By the end of the revolution, *Net-nari* introduced a special article "First One in Siam" (*khon-raek khong Siam*) in 1933, featuring a biography of Raem Phrommobon (born 1901, died 1998). Raem was a daughter of a police colonel, *Phraya* Buret Phadungkit. After completing her high school education at St-Joseph Convent, she enrolled at the Faculty of Law of Chulalongkorn University and became the first female Siamese barrister-at-law in 1931 (Philai in *Net-nari*, 1933). The author, Philai, wrote this article with the intention to praise Raem as a role model for the female readers. This was the first time the

women's print promoted a career woman. A similar article appeared in the interview of the first female civil servant, Talap Sirot. This 19-year-old woman was the first female to ever sit the civil service test with men for the government position. Talap was doing part-time study at Rajini School while working full-time at the Ministry of Finance. She said in the interview: "I decided to sit for the government exam with men because I want to make use of what I have studied for the benefit of the country" (Kanyayon in *Net-nari*, 1933, p 7). Both articles promoted the enhanced roles of women in Siamese society. With education, women had entered the male-dominated sphere. The law career and civil service had never offered official spaces for women before the 1930s. Nonetheless, *Net-nari* had proven that the Siamese society had already changed and women could perform tasks outside the domestic sphere as well as men.

The evidence shows that, both *Satri-thai* and *Net-nari* served a pivotal role in bringing the modern voices of women to the public audience. The period between 1925 and 1933 can, therefore, be considered as the heyday of the women's print industry that rose from the non-elite literati rather than the traditional elite women.

The Long Silence of Female Voices 1933-1948

After 1933, the print industry was affected greatly by the impact of the economic depression, the post-absolutist period of political instability, and the Second World War (Ubonwan & Uayphon, 1989; Barmé, 2002). In the early days of the post-revolution period in 1932, a number of newspapers emerged on the market with titles based on the democratic theme i.e. *Khwam-hen ratsadon* (Public Opinion), *Seriphap* (Freedom), and

Chaloem ratthathammanun (Celebrating the Constitution) (Barmé, 2002). Among these, two of them were the women-oriented daily newspaper *Ying-thai* (Thai Women) and the monthly magazine *Net-nari* (Women's Vision), which were published briefly between 1932 and 1933. The press censorship that was carried out by the People's Party (*Khana Ratsadon*) in late 1932 was a major cause of the decline of the women's print media. In fact, this type of censorship was not completely new to the Siamese press. Publications that criticised the government were largely monitored by the absolutist regime prior to 1932. Similar to the absolutist press-control policy, the aim of the People's Party censorship was to monitor criticisms in the print media that could pose danger to the public opinion (Barmé, 2002, p. 232). As a result, many of the aforementioned democratic-oriented papers were shut down. One of the most critical women's newspapers, *Ying-thai*, stopped its publications together with other newspapers in 1932 "for publishing remarks that were deemed to endanger public order" (Barmé, 2002, p 232). Unfortunately, the copy of *Ying-thai* cannot be located any longer at the National Library of Thailand but the content of the papers that Barmé had illustrated is rather similar to *Net-nari* magazine, focusing on the rights of women as analysed in the earlier part of this chapter, which also shut down in 1933 because of financial constraints. It seems that by the mid-1930s, the post-absolutist government had the advantage of the economic downturn. *Nari-nat*, one of the most successful women's magazines in the early 1930s, had also gone out of business because of the economic depression. Therefore, the voices of free women had gradually declined from the public sphere due to forces of government censorship and the world great depression.

Nevertheless, the social status of women was greatly enhanced during the leadership of Phibun and his introduction of the Cultural Mandates (1938-1944).[21] The new

[21] See chapter VII *Re-entering the Public Sphere: Wartime and Post-war Roles of Elite Thai Women.*

motto "The Morale of Thais is with the Thai Women" (*khwan thai yu thi ying thai*) was introduced to promote the value of women and equality with men. Phibun had not only successfully included women in the mainstream development of nationalism but also helped improve women's status in the domestic sphere. In the same period, the National Culture Council (*sapha watthanatham haeng chat*) had launched guidance for men in treating their wives, which concentrated on the commitment to having only one wife. An act of adultery found among government servants could result in a serious punishment (Ubonwan & Uayphon, 1989, p 26). To a disappointment, however, the free voices of women beyond the nationalistic sphere in the print media somewhat disappeared from the Siamese literati until the end of the 1940s. In the Second World War period, women were encouraged to participate in the national campaigns such as the "Hats Lead The Nation" campaign (*mala nam thai*) that promoted women to wear hats, and the Miss Siam Beauty Pageant that employed women contestants as agents of the Cultural Mandates.[22] Both of these campaigns enhanced the participation of middle-class Siamese women. Nevertheless, the women's print media industry did not seem to be stimulated. The publications of women's voices had disappeared although the number of literate women had increased. All of the discussed women's magazines that were published in the 1920s up to 1933 had completely gone out of business. Only after the Second World War ended did, the women's magazines reappear in Thai society.

[22] Ibid.

Women in the Post-absolutist Print Media 1948- 1952

After the long silence of the women's voices in the print media, the women's magazines were only revived after the end of the Second World War. Approximately twenty-five women's magazines and newspapers were published between 1947 and 1958 (Ubonwan & Uayphon, 1989). Among these, one magazine that stood out and took the lead in the women's print media was *Satri-san* (1948). This magazine was first issued fortnightly and later changed itself into a weekly magazine that provided news, domestic and beauty columns, English lessons, children's stories, and articles on female issues. Although the contents of *Satri-san* do not differ to a great extent from the previous magazines in the pre-revolutionary years of 1930s, the magazine offered a continuity of the Siamese feminist movement that had disappeared during the economic depression and wartime. *Satri-san* openly discussed female involvement in politics in the article "Should women enter into politics?" (*phu-ying khuan len kan-mueang?*) by Pla-mo. The author encouraged women to participate in national politics.

> Would it not be nice to have women who have the passion for politics serve our country instead of hiding them behind the (male) scene? (Pla-mo in *Satri-san*, 1948, p 34).

The statement above can explain the struggle of Siamese women in the public sphere that had not been expressed in the earlier decade. Moreover, the volume also discussed, for the first time, the female role in capitalism. The article "The Economic Victory of Thai Women" (*chaichana khong ying-thai nai dan setthakit*) brought up the success of the woman's business in hair perming and tailoring of the post-war economy (Chinda in *Satri-san*, 1948). This article highlights another pivotal role of women outside the domestic sphere.

By 1951, *Satri-san* had regularly published biographies of notable women in diverse career fields. They include the interview of the actress/artist Suphan Buranaphim and the journalist, Roem Chanthaphimpha. Apart from the promotion of career women in different fields, *Satri-san* also supported the voices of the elite women of the era--- the wives of politicians. The social news of *Satri-san* often featured wives of politicians such as La-iad Phibunsongkhram, Lekha Aphaiwong, and Orapin Chaiyakan. All of them were wives of remarkable male politicians and were part of the first generation of Thai female politicians.[23]

In the 1950s, Thai female politicians became major supporters of a magazine *Mae-ban kan-ruean* (1953). The magazine published a number of articles by the above female politicians, for example: the article "Women and the Nation" (*ying kap prathet chat*) by La-iad Phibunsongkhram, which encouraged women to contribute to the nation as much as to their families (La-iad in *Mae-ban kan-ruean*, 1953); and another article "For Women" (*phuea satri*) by Lekha Aphaiwong that records her experience in visiting an orphanage in England (Lekha in *Mae-ban kan-ruean*, 1954). Both of these articles reflected the roles of female politicians as role models for women in modern society. While La-iad encouraged women to be part of the nation's development, Lekha promoted herself as a leading figure in charity work and expressed her support for Thai women to get involved in the charity work.

[23] Orapin Chaiyakan became the first female Member of Parliament in 1949. La-iad Phibunsongkram and Lekha Aphaiwong became senators in 1950.

Conclusion

While the female elites were the major force of the development of women's magazines in 1920s, the situation had completely changed in the post Second World War period. Victorian era values served as the core of elite women's magazines in the absolutist years. Besides the domestic content, emphasis was placed mostly on the poetic and upscale language style that targeted at the elite readers. Even when short stories were introduced to these magazines, they were translated stories from English. This upscale style of language and content illustrate the Victorian-era influences that dominated the taste of aristocratic female readers in the 1920s. However, by the early 1930s, the critical voices of non-aristocratic women on social issues and gender equality had emerged. The women's print had greatly transformed in the mid-twentieth century. The literate commoners had slowly takeover the role from female aristocrats in the print media as early as the 1930s. Nevertheless, the economic depression, the political change, and the wartime conditions caused a pause in the rise of the critical voice of women until 1948, when the women's print media industry was revived. With the emergence of the new elite group of women, such as the female politicians, the role of the aristocratic elites would have to go through a dramatic period of transformation, which will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter VI

The Decline of *Fai Nai*: The Struggles of Aristocratic Women in the Post-absolutist Public Sphere 1910-1942

Introduction

This chapter aims to explore the transition of public roles between aristocratic women and commoner women in the immediate post-absolutist period from 1932 to 1953, and will focus on the following issues: first, the decline of the inner court women of Siam due to changes in the gendering of the administration of the late absolute monarchy; second, the struggles of women of the aristocratic class after the People's Party (*Khana Ratsadon*) took over in 1932 and the immediate post-revolutionary years; third, the roles of aristocratic women in the domain of cultural politics especially in the spheres of religion and literature in the post-absolutist period; and finally, the emergence of commoner women in the public political sphere. Through the voices of women, this chapter will demonstrate that class and family background were no longer the determining factors of women's roles in the public sphere of the post-absolutist period.

By the early 1930s, the critical voices of the educated middle class on social issues and gender equality had emerged. The bourgeois women's voices in the print media industry discussed in the previous chapter (see chapter V *The Rise of Women's Print Media: Competing Women's Voices in the Pre-revolutionary Years 1906-1932*) provided

key evidence of the rise of urban middle-class Bangkokians who, by this time, had taken over the roles of aristocratic women in the print media industry. While bourgeois women enhanced their social positions in both the fields of education and the print media industry, the roles of aristocratic women lessened due to the fall of *fai nai* (inner court). In fact, aristocratic women confronted challenges from the beginning of the 1910s, as King Vajiravudh ended the *fai nai* and gave a greater role to men in his administration (Chanan, 2013). This resulted in the decline of the aristocratic women of the inner court who were politically prominent in the previous reign of King Chulalongkorn. This major reform that had greatly impacted the lives of aristocratic women will first be explored in this chapter.

The Decline in Status of the Inner Court Women: King Vajiravudh's Reign (1910-1925)

The inner court women's roles during the reign of King Vajiravudh Rama VI (1910-1925) began to dramatically decline and finally ceased by the reign of King Prajadipok Rama VII (1925-1935). These women struggled with their demoted status in the inner court, compared to the situation in the previous reign of King Chulalongkorn for two major reasons. First, Vajiravudh's opposition to the practice of polygyny; and second, the increase in the number of male courtiers who replaced most of the women's roles in the palace. As the two factors determined the decline of the women's presence within the inner court of Rama VI's reign, the construction of Suan Sunantha Palace in 1908 to serve as a new female quarter, approximately four kilometres north of the Grand Palace, also highlights a significant change in the physical living space of palace women, which was

completely separated from the king's residence. This new female quarter is first to be elaborated here.

Inspired by European summer palaces, King Chulalongkorn had ordered the construction of Suan Sunantha Palace upon his return from his second European visit. This palace was designed to serve two major purposes. First, Suan Sunantha was to have a spacious and open green area where the king could relax and exercise in a natural environment without having to go out of Bangkok and second, to house the consorts who did not have any (male) children (Charuphan, 2007). As a result, the construction plan of Suan Sunantha was different from the Grand Palace that had the three distinct zones: the outer court (*Khet phra-ratchathan chan-nork*), comprised of offices of administration; the central court (*Khet phra-ratchathan chan-klang*) that served as residence for the king: and the inner court (*Khet phra-ratchathan chan-nai*) where the queens, princesses, and daughters of the aristocrats resided (Sasiwimon, 2004). Suan Sunantha Palace had a vast forest area in the centre and was surrounded by 32 residences of the consorts and daughters of King Chulalongkorn. This physical structure of Suan Sunantha supports the second purpose of its construction to serve as the residence of Chulalongkorn's childless consorts and their retinues. Although the construction of Suan Sunantha was part of Chulalongkorn's plan to support the expansion of the inner court rather than removing women from the central political power, Vajiravudh used the new palace to exclude women from his royal space. As the inner quarters were slowly diminishing from the Grand Palace as palace women had moved to Suan Sunantha, male courtiers began to take over tasks that previously belonged to inner court women. Suan Sunantha was finally completed in 1919 and it became a new reserved space for previous inner court women whose roles were replaced by Vajiravudh's male courtiers. By 1920, inner court women were no longer

physically present within the Grand Palace. In the same year, it was recorded that Suan Sunantha housed a total of 930 residents, comprised of approximately 896 women (including *khlon*) and 34 boys (Charuphan, 2007, p 12).

The removal of inner court women from the Grand Palace to Suan Sunantha reflects King Vajiravudh's perspectives and expectations on women including his opposition to the practice of polygamy. The king's personal encounter of the Victorian-era influences while he resided in England had significantly contributed to changes in women's roles and his introduction of male courtiers. In order to understand Vajiravudh's palace reform, the king's interpretation of the Victorian era roles of men and women will be discussed in the following part.

Victorian Gentlemen vs. Gentlewomen

The concept of *God, Queen, Country* was the key to the Victorian era ideology that influenced Vajiravudh's expectations in gender roles. This concept influenced the first Western-educated Siamese king to introduce a similar slogan *Nation, Religion* [Buddhism], *King* (*Chat, Satsana, Phra Mahakrasat*) to the public, which shaped the role of Siamese gentlemen. The formation of the first generation of scouts (*suea-pa*) in 1911, which were recruited from students of the Royal Pages College (*rong-rian mahatlek luang*), was one of the avenues through which the new nationalist ideology was promoted. The Siamese male scouts were to follow the three most important principles: (i) to be loyal to the ruler of the nation [King]; (ii) to love the nation and have faith in the religion [Buddhism]; and (iii) to

maintain unity among team members (National Scout Organization of Thailand, 2013)[24]. Siamese men, for the first time, were introduced to nationalist sentiments. They were supposed to unite with other men in serving the nation as nationhood became their core value.

The promoted scout activity, such as camping, aimed to help men exclude themselves from women. Men took their adventures to the wilderness, they had to learn how to perform tasks that belonged to women, such as cooking and cleaning. By doing this, men would be able to survive without the help of the women (Chanan, 2013). This evidence demonstrates Vajiravudh's attempt to separate men from women as men entered the public sphere of challenges. Vajiravudh's speech at Vajiravudh College of 18 May 1916 demonstrates the king's belief that women were the cause of men's weakness. As a result, men should restrain themselves from getting too close to women (Chanan, 2013, p 148). In other words, in the view of King Vajiravudh, the weak men were those with a sexual obsession with women. This is why the king delayed his marriage until only a few years before he passed away. Even in the last days of his life, he still preferred to be surrounded himself by the male court attendants rather than his consorts (Phunphitsamai, 2001). Therefore, Vajiravudh's relationships with his consorts were rather distant. He still spent most of his nights at the inner court with his inner court men after his marriage (Chanan, 2013, p, 153). As a result of the king's gender ideology, aristocratic women were confronted with a challenge, which was caused by the introduction of the male courtiers.

For Siamese women of the early twentieth century, their images and expected roles were also shaped according to Vajiravudh's interpretation of the Victorian era

[24]National Scout Organization of Thailand (2013) "In the reign of King Rama VI" (*nai samai ratchakan thi hok*). Accessed 7 October 2013. Retrieved from http://www.thaiscouting.com/history-of-scouting-in-thailand/http://www.scoutthailand.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=51&Itemid=79.

gentlewomen. In terms of appearance, the fashion of Siamese palace women was influenced by the Victorian period's influence introduced to them by the reign of King Chulalongkorn i.e. the long hairstyle had replaced the former short hairstyle worn by both males and females from the end of Rama V's reign. Princess Walai-alongkon (born 1884, died 1938), daughter of Chulalongkorn, was one of the first elite women to adopt the Victorian era modern style of fashion in her appearance (figure 6.1). The princess had abandoned the short man-like hairstyle and the *chongkraben* pantaloons form of clothing, which made the women look similar to men. Together with the new hairstyle and more gender-differentiated style of clothing, hats were also seen as a necessary Victorian era accoutrement for the princess.

Figure 6.1 Princess Walai-alongkon (far right) appeared in her modern Victorian period costume during the visit to Singapore with King Chulalongkorn and Queen Saowapha in 1896 (Thailand National Archives)

The localised utility of Western materials in the previous reign of King Chulalongkorn (see chapter II *Fai Nai (Inner City): King Chulalongkorn 1851-1910*), was replaced by the complete imitation of the then contemporary Western norms of fashion in Vajiravudh's reign. This was the direct outcome of Vajiravudh's promotion of *siwilai* appearance of Siamese women, which involved: first, the adoption of a fitted skirt (replacing *chongkraben*); second, the abandonment of the short man-like hairstyle as women were encouraged to wear long hair; third, the promotion of clean and white teeth at the same time as the abandonment of betel-chewing (Wannaphon, 2009, p 100). These changes in the Siamese women's appearance were the direct results of the Victorian era's influence.

Apart from fashion, women's roles in the inner court were also reformed during this period. As most tasks had been replaced by inner court men, only a small number of women remained within the Grand Palace. Even the Queen Mother Saowapha did not have any roles in the administration as she had in the previous reign of King Chulalongkorn when she held the position of the king's regent in 1897. Another influential lady, Princess Naphaphonprapha, who was the General Secretary of the Inner City (*Somdet Athibodi*) and Head of Department of Female Police (*Krom Khlon*) from 1897 to 1932, also moved out of the palace to reside with her family at Bangkhunphrom Palace by the beginning of Vajiravudh's reign in the 1910s (Anon., 2000). From this evidence of the declining roles of royal elite women, it can be seen that women in the previous reign of King Chulalongkorn were more active in the public sphere than in Vajiravudh's reign. For example, Queen Mother Saowapha was no longer involved in the male-focused politics of the reign of Vajiravudh while she had held the role of the head of the state when the king visited Europe as his regent in the previous reign. In another example, the female guards (*khlon*), who had been a major force of the inner city in the reign of Chulalongkorn, also became

unnecessary. Although these two women were still influential among other elite women, their power had decreased due to the disintegration of the inner city. The only exception was Princess Walai-alongkon, who was often chosen to liaise with foreign guests in official receptions by the king (Wannaphon, 2009). These challenges posed by Vajiravudh's interpretation of Victorian era gender norms caused aristocratic women to confront their decline by the beginning of the 1920s.

The Inner Court of Vajiravudh's reign: Male Courtiers

Because of Vajiravudh's internal administrative reform, the inner court women had moved out of the Grand Palace to their new quarters at Suan Sunantha and the king had replaced them with male court attendants. Chanan Yothong's work "*Nai nai* in the reign of King Vajiravudh" *(nai nai samai ratchakan thi hok)* studies the rise of male courtiers (*nai nai*) during the reign of Vajiravudh in comparison to palace women (*nang nai*) of the earlier Chakri kings.[25] In his work, the author states that, by 1925 there were as many as 890 royal pages employed by King Vajiravudh (Chanan, 2013, p 21). These male royal pages were not only working in the offices but also involved in the king's daily routine, which were the tasks that women had performed in the earlier period. Moreover, the Department of Royal Pages (*Krom Mahatlek*) in 1912 was established in the court in order to undermine the roles of women. The department served the tasks previously held by the women of the inner court, ranging from the security of the palace to the king's personal daily routine.

[25] Chanan Yothong uses the newly coined term '*Nai nai*' to refer to the male entourage of King Vajiravudh between 1910-1925 who worked and lived in the former female quarters, *fai nai,* in order to get into the close proximity to the king. In this chapter, the '*Nai nai*' will be translated by several English terms including, courtier, male court attendant, and men of the inner court.

Unlike the intake of inner court women, class was not the most significant factor in the king's selection of his male attendants. They were recruited from both male elites and commoners (Chanan, 2013, p 21). As a result, the aristocratic network, which used to be closely linked to the monarch through the tradition of 'daughter gifting', had reduced power in the court of Vajiravudh. In the previous reign of King Chulalongkorn, family background was one of the most influential factors in determining the assigned duties and responsibilities of an inner court woman i.e. the consort whose father was the previous king was automatically granted the highest title of the Chief Queen Consort as *phra mahesi*. In marked contrast, Vajiravudh recruited men to fill roles in the court based on his personal preferences rather than their family backgrounds. This was reflected in the appointment of the important positions in the administration of the Department of the Royal Pages. This newly founded department was led by two men, *Chao-phraya* Ramrakhop (born 1890, died 1967) and *Phraya* Anirutthewa (born 1893, died 1928), who were known as the king's favourites. While *Chao-phraya* Ramrakhop took the role of the head of the Department of Royal Pages, *Phraya* Anirutthewa had the title of the Head of Personnel. When compared to the previous reign, these two men had responsibilities similar to those of *Somdet Athibodi* (General Secretary of the Inner Court) and *Thao Worachan* (Head of Personnel), which had been held by Princess Naphaphonprapha and *Chaochom* Wat, respectively. Both women had aristocratic backgrounds and were personally related to King Mongkut (Rama IV). Naphaphonprapha, as daughter of King Mongkut (Rama IV), received the best education available in her day and was well respected by all palace women. Likewise, *Chaochom* Wat was one of Mongkut's favourite concubines, who was the most senior in the inner court at the time she was appointed as the Head of Personnel. From the evidence mentioned, Vajiravudh's method of recruiting court attendants was completely different from the previous reigns. Not only did he abandon the practice of polygamy, he also

discarded the importance of family connections in the recruitment of his court attendants. This highlights the actual decline of palace women in the anti-polygamous court of King Vajiravudh.

In fact, King Vajiravudh was not the sole opponent to the polygamous practice; a few male elites within the modern-growing Siamese society had supported the abolition of polygamy since the mid-nineteenth century, which relates to the encroachment of Western imperialism and its promotion of monogamy (Loos, 2006). On the other hand, many foreign legal officers employed at the court of Siam at that time did not oppose polygamy. A number of these Western men supported the continuation of polygamy as they believed the practice helped preserve Siamese customs (Loos, 2006, p 108). Because polygamy is associated with the politics of Siam, as Tamara Loos stated, "Polygamy performed political work that spilled over the boundaries of its definition as a mere marital category", it was therefore complicated for Siam's leaders to abolish it following the Western norm (Loos, 2006, p 110). Nevertheless, by the early twentieth century, debates over the question of polygamy started to grow among the Siamese male aristocrats and became widely popular in the media of the high imperialist period (Loos, 2006, p 120). Apart from Loos, Scot Barmé is another author who also emphasised King Vajiravudh's promotion of monogamy. Although by 1913 it was clear to Vajiravudh and his Western-educated Siamese fellows that introducing monogamy would only complicate legal matters, the king launched the requirement for his royal pages to register their wives and to get the king's permission before marriage (Barmé, 2002, p 161: Chanan, 2013, p 45). In addition, Vajiravudh's close entourage, such as the previously mentioned *Chao-phraya* Ramrakhop and *Phraya* Anirutthewa, did not get married until the king passed away.

With this transformation in the internal administration of Vajiravudh's inner court, the traditional practice where women were gifted to the king disappeared from the royal court of Siam. This corresponded to Vajiravudh's opposition to the harem image of Siam as seen through the eyes of Westerners. This image of Siamese harem, where women were oppressed and enslaved through the practice of polygamy, was best illustrated by Anna Leonowens, the governess at the Siamese court from 1862 to 1868, whose works were discussed in a previous chapter (see chapter III *Fai Nai (Inner City): King Chulalongkorn 1868-1910*). Her works were considered controversial for the author's criticisms on the practice of polygamy of Siamese male aristocrats. In "Romance of the Harem", the author wrote:

> The husband and father have unlimited power, even of life and death, over the wife and children (Leonowens, 1873, p 11).

In this statement, Leonowens demonstrates the brutal representations of Siamese men. This work of the English governess popularised the image of evil Siamese men as well as the uncivilised status of Siamese women to Western readers. In addition, slavery as well as harsh punishments carried out on women were also seen through the author's works.

Although Vajiravudh's attempt to end polygamy aimed to improve the harem image of the Bangkok court, it caused skepticism among Siamese aristocrats on the king's relationship with some of his male courtiers (Phunphitsamai, 2001). A government debt of four to five million baht was left when Vajiravudh passed away and it was suspected to be his spending on the property lands and houses given to his favourite male courtiers (Phunphitsamai, 2001). Princess Phunphitsamai recorded that "the king was surrounded by men who only love themselves, unlike Chulalongkorn who was surrounded by family" (Phunphitsamai, 2001, p 31).

The position of elite women in King Prajadhipok's reign (1925-1925) became even more insecure when the status of Siamese aristocrats, in general, was shaken by critiques from the growing educated middle class and also as a result the new government's budget cuts. As a result of the World Economic Depression in the early 1930s and growing criticisms against his absolutist reign, the king decided to reduce government expenditure, which had a massive impact on the aristocratic class. *Khunying* Mani Siriworasan, recorded in her autobiography that her family struggled with financial difficulties in the late 1920s. Being born into a noble family, Mani enjoyed the luxurious lifestyles of a Siamese aristocratic class until the government stopped her father's pension, and their residence lease due to government budget cuts (Mani, 2002, p 40). This example mirrors the lives of palace women in the same era. This mirrored the weakened status of the Siamese aristocratic class, and both the roles and numbers of palace women continued to decline in the reign of King Prajadhipok. The inner court ceased to exist when the People's Party (*Khana Ratsadon*) took over the last royal female space at Suan Sunantha in 1932. The next part of this chapter will examine the impact of the revolution of 1932 on the former palace women of Siam and trace the challenges that aristocratic women confronted.

1932 Revolution: Where did elite women go?

The revolution in June 1932 (*Patiwat 2475*) was considered to be one of the biggest turning points in Thai history but limited academic works emphasise its impact on elite aristocratic women. The former consorts and daughters of King Chulalongkorn and their retinues moved to their new residences in Suan Sunantha Palace in 1919, where they maintained their values and court etiquette even without King Vajiravudh's interest or

attention. In their private quarters, Princess Niphanopphadon (born 1885, died 1935) turned herself to a supporter of female education by founding Niphakhan School (figure 7.2) in the area of Suan Sunantha Palace to teach domestic skills to the younger generation of palace women in 1924 (Charuphan, 2007, p 38). This resembles the attempt of Queen Saowapha, who founded the first royal-sponsored girls' school Sunanthalai in 1892 (see chapter V *Early Female Education 1870-1910*). Nevertheless, the space of elite women in Suan Sunantha including Niphakhan School could not survive the revolution that overthrew the absolutist monarchy of King Prajadhipok in 1932. Some residences were turned into government offices after the revolution and the Niphakhan School was discontinued (Charuphan, 2007). The revolution did not only impact another royal sponsored girls' school, but also the lives of women of Suan Sunantha Palace.

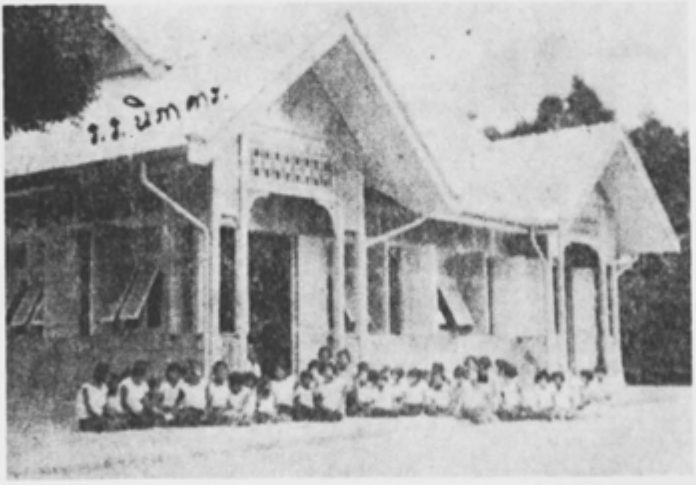

Figure 6.2 Niphakhan School, founded by Princess Niphanopphadon in 1924 within the area of Suan Sunantha Palace (Fernilluminati, 2012)

The People's Party's takeover of the Suan Sunantha caused palace women to look for a new place to live. Those consorts who had sons with King Chulalongkorn were more physically secure than others, as the princes' palaces became new residences for the former palace women after the revolution (Wannaphon, 2009). For example, Queen Consort Sukhuman-marasi, together with her sister Naphaphonprapha, and her daughter Sutthathipphayarat moved into Bangkhunphrom Palace of Prince Nakhonsawan. Other women including those consorts without children either sought to live with their relatives or were forced to live modest lives in monasteries. Therefore, the revolution in 1932 highlights the beginning of royal elite women's struggles. In the following part, I will investigate the lives of two aristocratic women who confronted challenges posed by the People's Party in the immediate post-absolutist years, Princess Phunphitsamai Diskul and Princess Naphaphonprapha.

When princesses became commoners in the foreign lands

I. Princess Phunphitsamai Diskul (daughter of Prince Damrong Rajanubhab)

Figure 6.3 Princess Phunphitsamai Diskul (Phunphitsamai, 2003)

As the People's Party took over, King Prajadhipok (Rama VII) and many aristocratic elites fled from Bangkok. The king and his wife, Queen Rambhai Barni, went for a tour in Europe in 1934 and decided to reside in England to avoid the political pressures. Both Prajadhipok and his wife never returned to Siam, and the king passed away from heart failure in England in 1941 (Phunphitsamai, 2001). Similar pressure from the new government also forced Prince Damrong, at the age of 70, and his daughters to leave Bangkok. One of Damrong's daughters, Princess Phunphitsamai Diskul (born 1895, died 1990) (figure 6.3), kept a journal of important events from 24 June, 1932, the day of the revolution, up to the day she returned to Bangkok in October 1942. The princess was one of the three daughters of Prince Damrong and *Mom* Chueai. She was sent to the inner city and became one of the ladies-in-waiting of Princess Niphanopphadon, King Chulalongkorn's favourite daughter. After the Revolution in 1932, Prince Damrong, as well as many other aristocratic families, decided to move out of Bangkok to the city of Hua Hin, where King Prajadhipok and Queen Rambhai Barni resided in the early days of the People's Party takeover. Not very long after the failed Baworadej rebellion, when Prince Baworadej attempted to restore the absolutist monarchy, in October 1933, the Diskul family felt that Hua Hin was no longer a safe place for them. From Thailand, the family decided to migrate to Penang in 1934 when the island was still part of British possessions. Being seen as an opponent to the new government, the family struggled with all kinds of difficulties, including financial problems due to the government cut down of pensions, and insecurity as they were seen as threats (Phunphitsamai, 2001: 2003). One of the reasons for the Diskul family to leave the country was the feeling of being in danger. Phunphitsamai describes every exciting moment during the journey to Penang. For the whole time, she was concerned that the government would send a force to stop them along the way. For her, it

was the most stressful and intriguing journey to get beyond the Siamese border. Once they reached the British territory, the princess expressed her relief as the following,

> After eating and freshening up, I felt as if I was a bird that was freed from the cage. I can now walk and talk freely without being so concerned of every step we make (Phunphitsamai, 2003, p 107).

Phunphitsamai's statement above describes her fear and stress of living in Siam during the period when the People's Party turned against the aristocratic elites. Freedom was what the princess longed for and she was expecting to enjoy that in Penang. Nonetheless, life in Penang was not as easy for the Siamese elites as the Diskul family thought it would be.

Besides cutting down on their spending, the princess and her family also had to sell their belongings in order to earn extra money. Old family golden bowls and caskets were sold to the locals. Moreover, Princess Phunphitsamai also recorded that she often felt uncomfortable when she had to interact with Siamese authorities in Penang. She said that most Siamese officials treated her and her family as enemies of the government (Phunphitsamai, 2003, p 120). At the beginning of their stay in Penang, Phunphitsamai observed that Siamese who lived in the island feared getting close to them. For a notable family such as the Diskul, it was hard for them to accept the kind of attitude. Nevertheless, Penang was a good second home to Prince Damrong and his daughters as he mentioned:

> Even if we have to be **strangers in a strange land**, it is still better than being **strangers in our own land!** (Damrong in Phunphitsamai, 2003, p 120, emphasised terms in English in original).

The prince's statement above underlined the struggles that his aristocratic family had to go through in the post-revolutionary years. Given that the widowed Damrong was at the age of

70 when his family moved to Penang, most responsibilities were placed on his daughters. They had to confront people who saw them as enemies as well as giving up their wealth and previous luxurious lifestyle. The family finally returned to Bangkok in 1942 during Field Marshal Phibun's regime and the period of his promotion of the Cultural Mandates.[26] Princess Phunphitsamai heavily criticised the new public norms that Phibun introduced by recording that "we have witnessed the decay of Thai society by the ridiculous mimicking of Westerners [*farang*] amongst Thais..." (Phunphitsamai, 2003, p 226). Phunphitsamai further demonstrated her resistance to Phibun's leadership when she stated that his Cultural Mandates were confusing and impractical, such as the new dress code for women to wear only fitted skirt was extremely difficult for rural women to follow as they had to perform labour work in the fields (Phunphitsamai, 2003, p 220). Moreover, she also criticised the social dominance of Phibun's wife, La-iad Phibunsongkhram, who was actively involved in politics by the time the Cultural Mandates were launched (Phunphitsamai, 2001). La-iad took the major role in the committee of the National Council of Culture for Women (*Sapha watthanatham haeng chat fai ying*) as well as the female cadet school. These roles, to Phunphitsamai, previously belonged to the women of the aristocratic background who were affiliated with the king. However, the rise of La-iad on the public scene, side by side with Phibun, was seen rather inappropriate in the princess's eyes, given that La-iad was born as a commoner woman (see chapter VII *Re-entering the Public Sphere: Wartime and Post-*

[26] Phibun introduced the following twelve Cultural Mandates between 1939 and 1942: (i) Mandate on *the name of the country, people and nationality*, issued 24 June 1939; (ii) Mandate on *preventing danger to the nation*, issued 3 July 1939; (iii) Mandate on *referring to the Thai people*, issued 2 August 1939; (iv) Mandate on *honoring the national flag, national anthem, and royal anthem*, issued 8 September 1939; (v) Mandate on *using Thai products*, issued 1 November 1939; (vi) Mandate on *the music and lyrics of the national anthem*, issued 10 December 1939; (vii) Mandate on *urging the Thai people help build the nation*, issued on 21 March 1940; (viii) Mandate on *language and writing and the duty of good citizens*, issued 24 June 1940; (ix) Mandate on *Thai dress*, issued 15 January 1941; (x) Mandate on *Thai dress*, issued 15 January 1941; (xi) Mandate on *daily activities*, issued 8 September 1941; (xii) Mandate on *protecting children, the elderly and the handicapped*, issued 28 January 1942.

war Roles of Thai Elite Women). This is part of the reasons why Princess Phunphitsamai and some other aristocratic women sought to represent themselves in other spheres rather than the political sphere, which had become dominated by wives of politicians from commoner backgrounds.

II. Princess Naphaphonprapha Krommaluang-thipphayaratkiritkulini (Daughter of King Mongkut)

A similar struggle is reflected in the life of Princess Naphaphonprapha. Naphaphonprapha (born 1864, died 1958) (figure 2.5) was the 68th child of King Mongkut and was born to *Chaochom* Samli. She was appointed as the General Secretary (*Somdet Athibodi*) of the inner city in 1897, which was considered to be the most important title in the restricted female quarters of the Bangkok court. During the reign of King Chulalongkorn, she assisted Queen Saowapha in various projects including the founding of the Siamese Red Cross in 1893 after the Franco-Siamese conflict (Anon., 2000, p 153). While the inner court became much smaller in size during Vajiravudh's reign, the Princess still kept her title and continued to be respected by palace women of Suan Sunantha Palace, although she spent most of her time at Bangkhunphrom Palace with her nephew *Krom* Nakhonsawan. Feeling threatened by the People's Party that overthrew the absolutist monarchy in 1932 as many other Siamese aristocrats, Prince Nakhonsawan and his beloved aunt, Princess Naphaphonprapha, fled to Bandung in Java, which was still part of the Dutch East Indies, in 1932. Unlike the Diskul family, Princess Naphaphonprapha and Prince Nakhonsawan did not have much time to prepare for their departure from Siam. Naphaphonprapha, at the age of 70, had only one day to prepare to board the train to the southern border. Knowing that her life in a foreign land would be difficult with financial

limitations, the princess decided to give up chewing betel by throwing out the last lot of betel while the train was crossing the border (Anon., 2000, p 164).

The most difficult circumstance for Princess Naphaphonprapha during her stay in Bandung was during the wartime. The Japanese invasion in 1940s followed by the independence war of Indonesia caused insecurity to Naphaphonprapha's family. They had to give up their residence to the Japanese forces during the Second World War and even had to stay in the local hospital during the war of Indonesian independence in 1945 (Anon., 2000, p 165). To worsen the situation in Bandung for the princess, Prince Nakhonsawan, who was the head of the family at the time, passed away at the end of 1945. As a result, Princess Naphaphonprapha returned to Thailand in 1946 after 13 years in Bandung. Upon her return, she lived her life modestly in her residence in Bangkok until the last day of her life.

Princess Naphaphonprapha's exile demonstrates another case of the elite struggle caused by of the revolution. Fleeing overseas in such unstable circumstances was a real challenge for a woman of the aristocratic class. Nevertheless, the majority of former palace women did not have the same opportunity to flee overseas. As a result, they sought to live with their relatives within Siam and some even used Buddhist monastery as their new shelter as in the case of *Chaochom* Sadap, which will be studied in the following part.

The consort's life in the monastery

Turning to Buddhism was one way to avoid the political chaos between the People's Party and the aristocrats. Although the People's Party did not capture any of the consorts or princesses, the revolution affected the lives of former palace women to a great

extent. Those who were related to the major male aristocrats often chose to leave the country and go into exile, such as the above-mentioned Princess Phunphitsamai and Princess Naphaphonprapha. Nevertheless, former consorts without children and those single ladies-in-waiting did not have many choices. One of the places where they could still maintain their peaceful living was the monastery. The last consort of King Chulalongkorn, *Chaochom* Sadap (born 1890, died 1983) (figure 6.4), found herself in a difficult situation as she became the king's favourite at a very young age. She recorded in her memoir that she was surrounded by eyes of jealousy, which made her life as a consort full of tensions (Phunsang, 1983, p 16). Even when King Chulalongkorn passed away, the jealousy among palace women never ceased because of the amount of jewelry she had received from the king. In order to prove herself as a sincere wife of the late king, Sadap returned all her jewelry to Queen Saowapha and turned to live in a Buddhist monastery for a peaceful life. As other consorts and princesses left the palace to their relatives' or even fled the country after the revolution in 1932, Sadap decided to reside within the temple of Khao Bang Sai in Chonburi Province (Phunsang, 1983, p 16). Within this temple, Sadap built a residence with the money she had saved. The consort, her mother, and her two sisters, *Chaochom* Chiat and *Chaochom* Ying, who were also consorts of King Chulalongkorn, all moved to this temple, where they spent time meditating and studying the Buddhist scriptures. After Sadap's retreat to the monastery, many other elite women of royal backgrounds also brought themselves closer to the monastery, such as Princess Wapi-Butsabakon, anotherdaughter of King Chulalongkorn.

Figure 6.4 *Chaochom* Sadap (Phunsang, 1983)

Traditionally, monasteries were reserved places for men. For elite men, entering the monkhood had long been a way for them to avoid political conflicts. King Mongkut was the example of a future Chakri monarch who stayed in the monkhood for a certain period of time in his younger life in order to avoid the political complications of his era. Sadap provided a path for other women from royal backgrounds to enter into the Buddhist sphere. Former palace women used the monastery to avoid the chaotic political circumstances after the overthrow of the absolutist regime. As a result, the monasteries offered the space for aristocratic women in the way that had never been seen before. Hence, the role of women in the religious sphere of the post-revolutionary period will be explored in the following part of this chapter.

The Reappearances of Elite Aristocratic Women: Religion and Literature

Although aristocratic women were excluded from the political sphere in the period after 1932, they began to re-emerge in the public domain through their roles in the spheres of religion and literature. Queen Consort Saowapha and Princess Naphaphonprapha were the two most dominant figures of the inner court by the end of the nineteenth century but their roles in the palace began to decline in the reign of King Vajiravudh before their roles finally ended completely in 1932. Only in the early 1940s did aristocratic women reappear in the public sphere as many of them returned from abroad, such as Princess Phunphitsamai who returned from Penang in 1942 and Princess Naphaphonprapha in 1946. Nevertheless, they only got involved in the fields of religion, literature, and social work. The women's role in the political sphere and the administration was reserved for male politicians and occasionally their wives. In other words, it can be said that aristocratic women chose to reappear in the 'safe' spaces, which prevented them from contacting the People's Party of the post-absolutist regime.

Aristocratic Women in the Buddhist Sphere

Chaochom Sadap used the monastery as a peaceful retreat when she felt that the political change imposed by the People's Party could no longer provide a safe space for her. In the meantime, this consort of King Chulalongkorn also became one of the major supporters of Buddhism whose role was significantly influential to other aristocratic women. Apart from Sadap, Princess Phunphitsamai Diskul was also another prominent

female figure in the Buddhist sphere of the post-absolutist period. Phunphitsamai's role as the supporter of Buddhism and the representative of the Buddhist community earned her an international reputation.

The role of Princess Phunphitsamai in the Buddhist sphere was different from *Chaochom* Sadap's. Phunphitsamai did not only support the local monasteries, she was also actively involved in the founding of the World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB) in 1933 before she fled Siam to Penang due to the political instability after the overthrow of the absolute monarchy (Phunphitsamai, 1990). Although Phunphitsamai's representation in this organisation ceased during the period of her family's exile, she did not hesitate to rejoin the Thai committee after she returned from Penang in 1953. Phunphitsamai then became the president of the organisation in 1964, an office she occupied for 12 years (Phunphitsamai, 1990). During these years, the princess gave numerous talks and lectures on Buddhism in various countries including the United States, Germany, the Soviet Union, and South Korea (Phunphitsamai, 1990). In addition, the role of Princess Phunphitsamai in the spread of Buddhist knowledge was also visible at the domestic level. Phunphitsamai supported the founding of a Buddhist study group at Chulalongkorn University, where she was personally involved in its weekly activities and mentored students as according to Buddhist teachings (Phunphitsamai, 1990). This evidence demonstrates that Princess Phunphitsamai represented the new dimension of the women's role. As she became an internationally known Buddhist leader and lecturer in Buddhism, Phunphitsamai broke into a sphere that had previously excluded women. She had proved that women could get involved in the Buddhist sphere and even diffuse Buddhist knowledge at both national and international levels.

Aristocratic Women in the Sphere of Literature

While aristocratic women felt oppressed by the new post-absolutist government in the political public sphere, some of them chose to express their voices in the sphere of literature. The official statistics demonstrated that 235,465 female students were enrolled in schools by 1925 (Barmé, 2002, p 153). This was a significant increase to the number of only 5,396 girls, recorded in 1915 (Barmé, 2002, p 153). The increased number of literate women and the expansion of the women's print media industry went hand in hand. The number of women's magazines had also dramatically risen in the period between 1906 and 1932 (see chapter VI *The Rise of Women's Print Media: Competing Women's Voices in the Pre-revolutionary Years 1906-1932*). Nonetheless, the media censorship carried out by the People's Party's government led to a pause on the development of the women's magazines in 1933. As a result, some elite female writers turned themselves to the genre of romantic writing. In romantic literature, these writers popularised the representations of modern women, the concept of love and marriage, as well as nationalism. Two of the most prominent female writers that emerged in the post-absolutist period were Princess Vibhavadi Rangsit (born 1920 died in 1977) and Buppha Nimmanhemin (born 1905, died 1963). Both of these elite female writers began their careers in the revolutionary years. By looking at their written works in the following section, I will detail the voices of aristocratic women that began to shape the domain of cultural politics in Siam's post-absolutist era.

Figure 6.5 Princess Vibhavadi Rangsit (middle) served as Queen Sirikit's secretary (*Naewna*, 2013)

Her Serene Highness Princess Vibhavadi Rangsit was born on November 20th, 1920 and died in 1977 (figure 6.5). In her early life, she studied at Watthana Academy and Mater Dei School. After completing her education, she began to work closely with her father, Prince Ratchani-chamcharat, who was a famous writer and the founder of *Pramuanwan* daily newspaper. Learning from her talented father, the princess earned a living from her writing skills and had her first publication at the age of 14 (Nuanchan et al, 1977). Her first short story, "The Naughty Child" (*Dek Chom Kaen*), based on Richmal Crompton's novel "Just William" (1922), was published in *Pramuanwan* daily newspaper in 1934 (Nuanchan et al, 1977). From then on, Vibhavadi began to write long novels with the influence of English writers and Western settings using the penname Wo. Na. Pramuanmak.

Her novels are romantic rather than realistic. The main characters are mainly

aristocrats, with both heroes and heroines coming from elite family backgrounds. This characteristic is reflected in one of Vibhavadi's most popular novels, *Pritsana* (1953). This is a romantic love story that the princess wrote during the Second World War, which illustrates the voices of the modern Siamese elite women. The story is set in urban Bangkok, and features the lives of aristocratic elites. Pritsana is the name of a confident young educated woman, who is the main character of the story. Wittiness, confidence, honesty, and beauty are the characteristics of the ideal modern elite woman that the readers can see in the character of Pritsana. Given that she grew up the United States, Pritsana often speaks Thai mixed with the use of English terms and also has an English version of her name as Prissy. A rather more sophisticated character than Prissy is the hero of the story, Prince Potchana-pricha. He is reserved but very kind and talented. The prince possesses good looks and wealth as well as talented skills in dancing, singing, and foreign languages, all of which make him a perfect man for female readers of the novel at the time (Nuanchan et al, 1977). All of the qualities of Vibhavadi's hero and heroine of *Pritsana* demonstrate the author's attempt to revive the romantic fantasy of the elite life to the readers. The novel also highlights that the ideal women are no longer confined within the domestic sphere. Pritsana had received education from overseas and works as a teacher at a girls school. This evidence reflects the author's belief in female education and support for career women.

Vibhavadi promotes freedom for women to choose their partners in her novels. In another novel *Rattanawadi* (1971), the heroine is Princess Rattanawadi, who falls in love with the disguised Prince Danaiwatthana, whom she thinks is a commoner. This was a new phenomenon in Thai literature for women to be granted with such romantic freedom (Nuanchan et al, 1977).

The mentioned fictional works of Princess Vibhavadi demonstrate the author's

attempt to preserve and disseminate her views and social position through literature. First her works highlight the romantic fantasy of the elite lifestyles that were oppressed by the new regime. Vibhavadi had revived the sentiments of luxurious elite living in her novels. This served the author's intention to preserve the noble image of the aristocratic class to the readers. Apart from the elite lifestyles, characters in Vibhavadi's works also emphasise the importance of family backgrounds, good up bringing, education, and manners of the aristocratic class. As a reflection of the author's life, her characters demonstrate the distinct qualities of the elites in Siamese society. As they are born in aristocratic families, well trained by Western forms of education and manners, Vibhavadi's characters are always confident and intelligent. All of the mentioned aspects of Princess Vibhavadi's works relate to the author's social position in the domain of cultural politics. Although the Siamese aristocrats' roles were reduced by the takeover of the People's Party after 1932, Vibhavadi, as a member of the aristocratic class, demonstrated her voice of pride in her fictional works which were popularised among noble readers as well as educated commoners. This, therefore, highlights Vibhavadi's remarkable role in the domain of cultural politics in Siam's post-absolutist era.

Apart from her literary works, Princess Vibhavadi was also a devoted secretary of Queen Sirikit, who dedicated her life to social works (Nuanchan et al, 1977). Vibhavadi spent the last days of her life visiting the field army in the southern provinces of Thailand, where she was shot and died while travelling in a helicopter in 1977. With her great work, the government built a memorial monument for Princess Vibhavadi in Suratthani, where she passed away, in order to commemorate her sacrifice in fighting for the nation against communism (Nuanchan et al, 1977). This was probably the first monument of a modern national female heroine rather than the mythical heroines from the royal chronicle (*phong-*

sawadan). The fact that the government had highly praised Vibhavadi as a national heroine after her tragic death gives the evidence of the rehabilitation of the monarchy and royalism of the period of the 1970s. In other words, Princess Vibhavadi's role in the public sphere through her work with Queen Sirikit marked the state's recognition of aristocratic women in the resumed royalist era.

II. Buppha Nimmanhemin

Figure 6.6 Buppha Nimmanhemin (Somphop, 1986)

Buppha Nimmanhemin (born 1905, died 1963) was a notable author of a number of stories published in women's magazines and novels. Buppha Nimmanhemin, who was also known by her famous pen name *Dokmaisot*, was a daughter of *Phraya* Thewetwongwiwat and *Mom* Malai. Although born in an aristocratic family, Buppha's mother, Malai had left her when she was only three years old. As a result, Buppha grew up with her father and stepmothers (Somphop, 1986). She received an elite education at St-Joseph Convent

School where she had an opportunity to learn French and read French novels. By 1927, Buppha started her writing career when she published her first play script, *Di Fo* (Fright), in *Thai Khasem* magazine (Somphop, 1986, p 40). In addition, she also published a few more works of prose fiction in the women's magazine, *Nari-nat*, in the pre-revolutionary years.

In her work, *Modern Thai Literature,* Mattani Ratnin contends that Thai novels in the post-absolutist years "moved closer to realism" from the romantic themes of the early twentieth century (Mattani, 1988, p 37). Buppha was one of the realistic authors who wrote a number of works of fiction that involved social themes, such as the poverty theme in *Good People* (*Phudi,* 1937) (Somphop, 1986). Apart from this theme, the author also promoted representations of modern women that broke away from the traditional heroines. Women in Buppha's works are well educated, confident, and liberal (Wimonmat, 2006). Both Patchari in *Three Men* (*Sam Chai*, 1933) and Anong in *The Accident* (*Ubattihet,* 1934) went to missionary convent schools, where they received a Western style of education, which influenced them to be confident and liberal in their ideas. One of the apparent examples of the modern aspect of women in Buppha's novels is the promotion, for her heroines, of freedom to choose their partners. Patchari in *Three Men* demonstrates the image of modern women who would not accept to be chosen by men, but rather be the one who thinks for herself for who would be her suitable partner (Wimonmat, 2006, p 7). Nevertheless, the modern women of Buppha's novels still have qualities of a good wife. Although they were influenced by Western education, the author's female characters maintained the good domestic skills. The heroine in *One of A Hundred* (*Neung Nai Roi*) (1934) demonstrates that she could organise formal receptions for her husband's colleagues as well as taking care of a household. Although she received education from foreign

missionaries at the convent school, she can still perform the role of a good housewife (Wimonmat, 2006).

Unlike the works of Princess Vibhavadi, Buppha's works of fiction brought out social problems and criticisms to the government. While Vibhavadi concentrated on romantic stories of the aristocratic society, Buppha illustrated the struggles of aristocrats in *Three Men* that she wrote in 1933, one year after the revolution. Rat, the main character of the story, is a nobleman who chooses his occupation as a salesman, instead of serving for the government as most Siamese aristocrats would do because of the economic difficulty of the post-absolutist period (Trisin, 2006, p 2). It seems that Buppha was inserting her comment on the change in the aristocratic life. According to the author, people of the noble background should be able to embrace the challenges that sprang out of the political change of Siam. A salesman was considered to be a job that is beneath his station but Rat still took it despite criticisms of his relatives. Apart from the aristocrats' struggle in *Three Men*, Buppha also criticised the military government under Phibun's regime in *The Last Work of Fiction* (*Wannakam Chin Sut-thai*) (1949), which she started writing in 1949 but passed away before she could finish it. The voice of the female character, Surangrat, complaining about Phibun's campaign to promote women to wear hats in public, is the evidence of Buppha's criticism against the military regime. In addition, Buppha also challenged the definition of a nobleman by redefining the term *phudi* in *Good People*. Traditionally, *phudi* refers to a well-mannered person with a good family background---a nobleman. However, Buppha had shaped the definition of this term in her work by stating "a person is bad because of his/her actions…and a person is noble (*phudi*) because of their good actions" (Dokmaisot, 1937, p 2). Refining such a traditional term highlights Buppha's remarkable attempt to reform the aristocratic attitudes as the political reform took root. In other words,

Buppha was calling for the realistic approach from the elite class toward changes in Siam's political transition in the period after 1932.

The mentioned aspects of Buppha's works illustrate the move of Thai literature toward realism in the post-absolutist period up to the 1950s in the way that none of the aristocratic woman authors had done before. Although Buppha did not enter into politics or physically appear in the public scenes, her works greatly contributed to the sphere of Thai literature.

Conclusion

Siamese aristocratic women confronted challenges from the reign of King Vajiravudh as a result of changes in the gendering of the internal administration. The replacement of roles within the inner court by male courtiers caused the decline in the status of aristocratic women by the 1920s. Although overall Siamese women's status seemed to have improved with the increase number of educated women and the boom in women's magazines as explored in the previous chapters, the revolution in 1932 was a turning point in Siam's political history and also in the public presence and roles of the aristocratic class. While the aristocrats struggled with their degraded social status, as the result of the People's Party's takeover, the middle-class population was granted an opportunity to participate in the political public sphere. This general rise of the middle-class Siamese massively affected the former palace women of the aristocratic background. The impact of the 1932 revolution on aristocratic women brought the official end to the *fai nai* (inner court). After 1932, the roles of aristocratic women completely diminished as the

People's Party's government closed their quarters at Suan Sunantha. As a result, these former palace women were put under pressure to find new homes. Some of them fled Siam together with their male relatives, such as Princess Phunphitsamai and Princess Naphaphonprapha, who lived in exile in Penang and Bandung, respectively.

The presence of aristocratic women had disappeared from the political scene but reappeared in the religious and literature spheres of the post-absolutist period. Women of the aristocratic background became supporters and representatives of the Buddhist community i.e. *Chaochom* Sadap and Princess Phunphitsamai. Moreover, the voices of aristocratic women were also expressed in the fictional works of two remarkable female writers; Princess Vibhavadi Rangsit and Buppha Nimmanhemin. Both aristocratic writers had brought representations of modern women as well as criticisms toward the military regime into their works. While the roles of aristocratic women disappeared from the public political sphere by the late 1930s, commoner women marked their way into the public scenes through their participation in campaigns of the new government under the leadership of Field Marshal Phibun Songkhram. The rise of commoner women in the political public sphere will be the central discussion of the next chapter.

Chapter VII

Re-entering the Public Sphere: Wartime and Post-war Roles of Elite Thai Women

Introduction

The challenges confronted by aristocratic women, from both the male-centred aristocracy and from the rising commoner elites, were the causes of the replacement of aristocratic women's roles by commoner elite women. Following the discussion of the previous chapter, this chapter aims to study the rise of commoner women in the political public sphere of the post-revolutionary period between 1932 and 1942. By the revolutionary year of 1932, Siamese elite women had been represented in the political domain of the post-absolutist regime. They became more involved in the public sphere, participated in politics, and eventually served as agents of nationalism in the continuous era of state building. In order to understand the pivotal role of elite women in politics of the post-absolutist regime, this chapter will use the voices of wives of politicians: La-iad Phibunsongkhram (born 1903, died 1984), Lekha Aphaiwong (born 1913, died 1983), and Phoonsuk Banomyong (born 1912, died 2007), to analyse the state's enhanced recognition of women in the nation-building process and the promotion of greater political participation of women beyond the aristocratic class barrier.

This chapter is divided into two major parts. The first part provides an overview of roles of women under the post-revolutionary national discourse, which will focus on consequences of *ratthaniyom* or Cultural Mandates under Phibun's regime on women's roles, and the second part will concentrate on the case studies of prominent wives of politicians. Biographies of La-iad Phibunsongkhram, Lekha Aphaiwong, and Phoonsuk Banomyong will be emphasised in this chapter. These three women became political agents in the public sphere following their husbands' roles in modern Thai politics. The public roles of the three women will be examined in this chapter in order to highlight the greater significance of commoner women in the Thai public sphere of the post-revolutionary period.

Post-1932, Women in Nationalist Discourse

Although women had been granted a space in the national discourse by the post-revolutionary year of 1932, they were still serving as objects of the state's manipulation. The organisation of the first female beauty pageant and the Cultural Mandates regarding representations of women are major examples of the increased female significance in the national scheme. Women became promoting agents of the constitution from 1934 through the beauty pageant *Nangsao Siam* (Miss Siam). Following the success of the revolution, the government had decided to organise an annual celebration of the constitution in December, which comprised different performances, including the beauty pageant.[27] However, this beauty pageant differed from the modern *Nangsao Thai* (Miss Thailand) that commodifies

[27] The pageant took place annually from 1934 to 1940 but due to the crisis of the Second World War, the pageant stopped and only resumed in 1948 under the Phibun regime. However, after the war, the objective of the pageant shifted from the constitution promotion to the promotion of nationalism.

women as globalised subjects. The most important objective of Miss Siam was to promote the constitution and send official messages to the masses (Sujira, 2007). Middle-class women who were contestants were serving as agents of the state. These annual events attracted people from middle to lower classes of the population, hence the message from the government could easily reach the masses. Nevertheless, women were not only the passive objects that were manipulated by the government; they were active in another national scheme – the Cultural Mandates.

Two Parallel Revolutions in Representations of Women

Two dramatic social revolutions occurred in the history of modern Siam, now Thailand, in a similar manner. The first attempt to modernise female images took place in the latter half of the nineteenth century, which was initiated by King Mongkut (Rama IV) and reached its heyday during the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V). The second transformation of female representations followed the pattern that was laid by the Siamese modernising kings, in the twentieth century when Field Marshal Phibunsongkram (Phibun) took the seat of the Prime Minister. These transformations in the two eras greatly affected women in various aspects, such as in their images, and social expectations. However, the impact on women cannot be clearly demonstrated without exploring the atmosphere of the two eras and factors that influenced the initiatives for reforms.

The most important elements that influenced the social changes were the Victorian era that inspired the "Western modes of consumption" of the Siamese elites in the nineteenth century and the growing nationalist sentiment of the pre-Second World War era during the 1930s (Peleggi, 2002). These two factors had controlled the directions of

reforms in the societies of both periods. The influence of the Victorian era was widely promoted within *fai nai* (inner court). Peter Jackson has stated that the high cultural imperialism of the Victorian era had influenced the Siamese king to fully 'clothe' the population and visually differentiate genders as part of the civilising mission, which aimed to enhance Siam's status in order to defend the nation from the encroachment of imperialism (Jackson, 2003). As males and females in late nineteenth century Siam wore similar clothes and hairstyles, King Chulalongkorn encouraged women of the royal court to wear long hair and skirt instead of *chongkraben* (unisex trousers) in order to differentiate the genders and to demonstrate the existence of Siamese civilisation. While the Western concept of civilisation played a significant role in the refashioning of early modern elite women, nationalism was the core of social transformation during Phibun's era. One of Phibun's major tools in propagating nationalism that included the xenophobic sentiments among Thai people was the Cultural Mandates (*Ratthaniyom*), that began to propagate in 1939. In the Prime Minister's speech of 24 June 1939, he referred to the Cultural Mandates as "the customary practice of the nation that Thai people shall adhere to" (S T. 15.2.1/6, p 2). Phibun also further explained that the Cultural Mandates would give directions on the good manners of the people in the great civilised world (S T. 15.2.1/6, p 2). Therefore, in order to achieve the goal of the Cultural Mandates, various changes were encouraged by the state, for example, the promotion of 'Thai' as a name of the nation (Thailand), the people, and nationality instead of 'Siam' (S T. 15.2.1/6, p 2). Moreover, the announcement emphasised the security of the nation. The Prime Minister underlined the responsibility of all Thais to protect the nation from foreign intervention. One of the articles of the Cultural Mandates states, "the citizens of Thailand must not reveal any information that might harm the nation to any foreigners. If anybody commits such actions it would be considered as treason" (S T. 15.2.1/6, p 9). From this evidence, it seems the Cultural Mandates

demonstrated the government's aim to arouse xenophobia among Thai people. Nevertheless, of all aspects of the Cultural Mandates, the new public dress-codes were one of the most controversial social transformations of the era. This clothing-the-nation process was called upon in both the period of Siam's Victorian era and in the nationalist regime. Why was this transformation so significant to the Thai ruling elites of the two eras? The answers to this question will be found in the following part.

Victorian Era versus Cultural Mandates (*Ratthaniyom*)

The transitional era from the absolute monarchy to the early constitutional monarchy, underlines remarkable changes that have shaped Thai society and especially the role of women. This period demonstrates the state's attempts to refashion the society as according to their perceptions of 'civilisation'. Although the target group of women in the civilising mission carried out by the state in the absolutist and post-absolutist periods were two distinct groups, the causes and approaches were similar. The Victorian-era influences that was adopted by King Chulalongkorn resulted in the new representations of elite women of the inner court rather than women from lower ranks. In other words, the refashioning of women's role in the late nineteenth century was confined within the Siamese court only. In contrast, in the period of hyper-nationalism under the control of the Cultural Mandates, the state's civilising mission was subjected to all women beyond class barriers. In order to prove that the state's Cultural Mandates contributed to an increase in female participation in the public sphere, two terminologies *siwilai* and *arayatham*, which offer the same meaning as the English term 'civilisation', need to be examined.

'Siwilai' and *'Arayatham'*

A number of researchers and scholars have focused their studies on Siam's survival in the colonial era (e.g. Harrison & Jackson, 2010). One of the major themes of this literature is the Siamese road to *siwilai*, the term that was introduced to the Siamese court, from the direct English borrowing of the word 'civilisation', in the second half of the nineteenth century. Both scholars Thongchai Winichakul and Maurizio Peleggi have described the civilising process of Siam as a 'conceptualised scheme' (Thongchai, 2000: Peleggi, 2002). Thongchai classifies varying degrees of *siwilai* from forest, village, city, and Europe. In the nineteenth century, the quest for civilisation was considered most important for the survival of Siam's sovereignty as carried out by Thai elites. The process of *siwilai* demonstrated the anxiety of Siamese elites regarding the adoption of Western lifestyles. Instead of focusing on the mission of civilisation on a larger scale with varying degrees as did Thongchai, Peleggi confined his work to the court of Siam. He illustrated the transnational cultural flows represented in the court of Siam, which can be seen in the refashioning of self-images, Westernised modes of consumption, residential and representational architectures, and public spectacles. These are all part of the new image of a *siwilai* Siam. Hence, to consume the Western sense of self was to bring the nation to civilisation.

On a similar notion, *arayatham* was a more common term for 'civilisation' in the post-revolutionary period. *Arayatham* or "peace and happiness that lie on the basis of good morals and law which includes the prosperity of custom and tradition", as defined by the Thai Royal Institute, was a preferred term that Phibun chose to use in the Cultural Mandates (*ratthaniyom*) of 1939, rather than *siwilai* that had been used earlier (Ratchabandittayasathan, 1999, p 1367). The choice of terminologies reflects the political

tensions of Phibun's era, in which foreigners were considered as the most dangerous enemies of state. As *siwilai* served as a safeguard to colonialism in the nineteenth century, Phibun's government employed *arayatham* to defend Thailand from foreign enemies in the pre-Second World War period. Phibun expressed his concerns on the resistance people had to the Cultural Mandates that could have been caused by "foreigners who aimed to break up" the population (S T. 15 2.1/20, p 3). Colonialism, as claimed by Phibun, was a threat to non-civilised nations. Hence, in order to evade colonisation, the Thai government sought to bring up the nation to *arayatham* or to civilisation through the promotion of the Cultural Mandates. Foreigners were seen as enemies of the state who preferred other nations to remain 'barbaric' in order to claim possessions of those territories (S T. 15 2.1/20, p 3). This message encouraged the people of now 'Thailand' to adhere to the principles of the Cultural Mandates. While *siwilai* might have been seen as a mission led by men, *arayatham* required the participation of all people of the nation, as *rath* means 'state' and *niyom* means 'popular'. Within the political context of Phibun's era, women were once again subjects of modern representations and this time they were more active than before.

Clothing-the-Nation

Attempts to modernise the society according to the Cultural Mandates resembled the hybrid culture or the 'localised practice' adopted by the Siamese elites during the fifth reign, which was reflected in the process of clothing the nation (Thongchai, 2000). Jackson has pointed out that Chulalongkorn's attempts to: (i) represent heterosexual relations as civilised; (ii) fully 'clothe' the population; and (iii) visually differentiate the genders, were key elements to the refashioning of the nation as one of the aspects of the *siwilai* mission (Jackson, 2003). This highlights the high imperialist culture of the Victorian era, which had

a direct influence on representations of Siamese women. As seen in official historiography, elite women of Rama the Fifth period are represented in official texts with a great sense of modernity, for example, *Somdet phrachaolukthoe chaofa* Walai-alongkon (Princess), a daughter of King Rama the Fifth, is praised highly as a modern woman for wearing a long hair style and a fitted skirt (Krom Sinlapakon, 2004). The princess had abandoned the short man-like hairstyle and *chongkraben,* which made the women look the same as men. The hyper-nationalist regime employed a similar approach in the practice of the Cultural Mandates. Phibun constructed a discourse of the body of Thai citizens through his new dress code campaign. By using the narrative emphasising on Siam's civilised past, the government persuaded people to believe that the introduced styles of clothing had long existed in the nation's glorious history. Trousers, for example, were recorded in *Luang* Wichit's account as having been worn from the pre-Sukhothai period, but later being replaced by the sarong, which he claimed was introduced to Siam from India (Kongsakon, 2002 pp 149-151). The new decree was addressed to both Thai male and female citizens to adjust and adopt the new public dress codes according to the nation's measurement of *arayatham* is illustrated in figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1 Thai Culture in the Phibun Period: Do's and Don'ts (Somkhit, 2010)

The traditional villagers' costumes (left column of figure 7.1) were forbidden and replaced by Western styles of clothing (right column of figure 7.1). Nonetheless, more concerns were expressed about the clothing of women than men. Prime Minister Phibun stated in a letter to the Minister of Education that the appearance of women resembles the appearance of the nation. "Seeing beautiful things such as flowers or women who are well-clothed brings happiness to the eyes and soul....if everybody dresses according to the Cultural Mandates, our sovereignty will be kept in a safe place" (S T. 15 2.1/20, p 3). The words of Phibun demonstrate the government's encouragement in the refashioning of all Thais, especially women, as part of the nation-building process.

The announcement of the Department of Propaganda of 1938 (Krom Khotsana) requested participation from all Thai women to adjust their dress style according to the following principles:

I) All Thai women are kindly requested to wear long hair as according to the popular custom of the present day.

II) All Thai women are kindly requested to stop wearing pantaloons (*chongkraben*) and adopt fitted-skirts as according to the popular custom of the present day.

III) All Thai women are kindly requested to wear a blouse instead of a shawl to cover the upper part of the body (S T. 15.2.1/13, p 4).

From this announcement, the Western influence had once again played a significant role in reshaping the images of women. In fact, all three principles that are listed in this announcement repeat the Victorian styles that had been directed by King Chulalongkorn to be adopted within the inner court in the late nineteenth century. Therefore, 'clothing the nation' between the two eras reflects a similarity in relation to the concept of localised

civilisation, which the ruling class of each era had interpreted and defined. The quest for *siwilai* in the absolutist era and *arayatham* later in Phibun's era were central to the nation's interest, and clothing the population was one significant step to achieve the goal of being called civilised. However, in the period of hyper-nationalism, the Cultural Mandates made this refashioning process a political one that went beyond class borders between elites and commoners. This is not to make the assumption that the change of the images of the women of the inner court was not a political one, but rather to underline the scale of popular influence of the Cultural Mandates. The Cultural Mandates targeted the masses and women's participation was as essential as men's. Even though this attempt by the government tended to have turned women into passive objects of nationalism, the state's female agents of the Cultural Mandates demonstrate the evidence of women's roles in another public scene of politics.

The Rise of Commoner Women in The Cultural Mandates Period 1939-1942

While the roles of aristocratic women disappeared from the political sphere after the 1932 revolution, another group of women rose in their place. These were the middle-class women from commoner backgrounds, led by the wives of politicians who portrayed themselves as role models of Siamese women, such as Phibun's wife, La-iad Phibunsongkhram; and Khuang's wife, Lekha Aphaiwong. These women were involved in the social transformation of women during the years of the Cultural Mandates between 1939-1942.

While the state intruded itself into the personal lives of the Siamese population by introducing the new set of social norms in the Cultural Mandates, aristocratic women expressed their resentment toward the military regime, especially regarding the new dress code. This dress code promoted women to adopt the Western style clothing of wearing a blouse and fitted skirt, which had to be worn with a hat in public. This post-absolutist refashioning of women's fashion had employed Western accoutrements as tools to promote nationalism and nation progress (*arayatham*). The following example of the *Mala Nam Thai* Campaign (hats-lead-the-Thai-nation campaign) demonstrates the employment of hats in the nationalist propaganda of Phibun's era, which included middle-class women as agents of the state's cultural policies, while causing tensions for the aristocratic women.

The Rise of Middle-class Women: Agents of *Mala Nam Thai* Campaign (hats-lead-the-Thai-nation campaign)

Phibun might have inspired new agents of nationalism but he could not completely convince the old group of palace women (*nang nai*) to do the same. Voices of the aristocratic women about the new obligation to wear hats clearly opposed the government. Queen Sawang-watthana (born 1862, died 1955), a wife of Chulalongkorn, demonstrated her resentment toward the hat-wearing campaign as followings

> As it is, I could hardly maintain my own identity. Now they want to interfere with my head...Well, I won't wear it. If they want me to wear a hat, they would have to sever this head and put a hat on it themselves (Somphop, 1971, in Kopkua, 1995).

Queen Sawangwatthana was one of the leading inner court women who adopted the hybrid Western-Siamese fashion in the reign of King Chulalongkorn. The queen represented herself in Victorian-style blouse and *chongkraben* pantaloons, which was the popular fashion of elite women of the royal backgrounds at the time. Nonetheless, she expressed her opinion against the hat-wearing campaign in a very forceful way. From this evidence, it can be seen that monarchical leadership was more inspiring to aristocratic women than Phibun.

Phibun's effort to enforce national culture has two sides: the interior; and the exterior (Kopkua, 1995). While patriotism, traditional values, Buddhist teachings, and Thai heritage were believed to domestically create a "new cultured Thai society", the adoption of certain Western cultural norms would (physically) help the nation gain the civilised status (Kopkua, 1995, p 109). It was in order to implement the international side of Phibun's national culture that the *Mala Nam Thai* campaign was introduced for all people to wear hats as an important accoutrement of the new dress code. The song *Suam Muak* (wear a hat) produced by the Propaganda Department's band and sung by Manthana Morakun (figure 7.2), a famous female singer of the department during the Phibun era, promoted this specific campaign.

Figure 7.2 Manthana Morakun (right), the promoter of the *Mala Nam Thai* campaign (Thai Film Foundation, n.d.).

The lyrics of the song were written by the popular song writer/producer *Khru* Auea Sunthonsanan. The message of the song persuaded the targeted women to wear hats as they would help the nation progress. Moreover, the lyrics also aimed to target women rather than men. "These hats complement the faces and bodies of us Thai women" demonstrates a persuasive message to Thai females that hats should be seen as essential accessories that would contribute to their beauty (Thai Film Foundation, n.d.). Through the voice of the female singer, it became even more apparent that this campaign was projected toward the female society. Finally, the song also encouraged obedience toward the leader as seen in the last sentence of the song that stated "in order to support what the leader had encouraged" (Thai Film Foundation, n.d.).

"Orderliness and uniformity", according to Phibun were two of the basic elements of a cultured and civilised nation (Kopkua, 1995, p 118). The dress code of the Cultural

Mandates reflects Phibun's idea to achieve this goal. As hats had served as symbols of civilised status of Phibun's era, they also served as symbols of power of the rising middle-class women that was granted by the state. While the state undermined the status of aristocratic women, it successfully included the middle-class commoner women in the mainstream nationalist movement by giving them the role of nationalist agents. This evidence demonstrates the rise of the new influential group of women in Thai society that had replaced the roles of the aristocratic elite women. This is the reason why women of the aristocratic background openly expressed their resentment about the hat-wearing campaign.

While the launching of the hat-wearing campaign aimed to modernise the appearance of the people and bring up the nation to the civilised status, the campaign was also objectionable to civilians at the same time. People were fined if found without hats in public areas. This brought resentment from the public toward the campaign and also impacted on Phibun's popularity. The objection towards the hat-wearing campaign was apparent among the public as a whole, for it was simply impractical for the people of the nation (Kopkua, 1995). Even Manthana Morakun, the singer of the Department of Propaganda (*Krom Khotsana*) who sang the song *Suam Muak*, complained that wearing a hat in Bangkok was certainly impractical for her everyday life. While one hand needs to grab the hat so that it won't get blown away by the wind, the other hand must hold on to the skirt that women had to wear instead of the more practical *chongkraben* (Pairaya, 2006). Even though wearing a hat seemed to be objectionable everywhere, the public offices still imposed strict control over this policy. These public places had the right to deny services for people without hats. As a result, the resentment among people against authority continued to rise until the end of Phibun's regime. It was quite unsurprising that Khuang Aphaiwong had the *Mala Nam Thai* Campaign cancelled as soon as he took the seat of the

Prime Minister after Phibun in 1944. Nevertheless, the campaign had, to a certain extent, transformed the representations of non-aristocratic women and brought them to the public sphere where they served as state's agents.

From this example of the *Mala Nam Thai* Campaign, we can see that aristocratic women's role in the public sphere was resented and eventually disappeared completely. The image of the Civilised Lady of the glorious absolutist era was replaced by progressive women of the Cultural Mandates era. It was during these significant years between 1939 and 1942 that roles of wives of politicians rose to the political public sphere of Thailand, which will be further discussed in the next part of this chapter.

Wives of Politicians Enter the Political Public Sphere

Three Prominent Politicians of the Post-revolutionary Era: Plaek Khittasangkha (Phibun), Pridi Banomyong, Khuang Aphaiwong

As I discussed in the previous chapter, the period between 1910 and 1932 was the era of rising elite nationalism. King Vajiravudh, who spent almost a decade in Britain for education and training, had popularised the Victorian era's influences among the elites of Siam. His passions for English poetry, drama, and other Western romantic movements served as his inspiration to promote the triad of *Nation, Religion and Monarch* on the model of British *God, King and Country,* which was considered the first official construction of Thai nationhood (Wyatt, 1984). While King Vajiravudh proceeded with his modern nation-building, there was an increase in the number of Siamese students who went for training in various European countries following the trend that the monarch. As a result,

the Western training that had previously been reserved only for aristocratic men began to open space for middle-class men and even for women in this particular period.

Among a growing number of students who went for training in Europe, Plaek Phibunsongkhram (born 1896, died 1964),[28] Pridi Banomyong (born 1900, died 1983) and Khuang Aphaiwong (born 1902, died 1968) became major politicians and the most influential figures of the crucial period between 1932 and 1957. They shared similar backgrounds in education and were members of the People's Party that overthrew the monarchy in 1932. Plaek, who later took the name Phibun, rose from a middle-class family to become the country's top leader with a great cult of personality. He entered the military academy at the age of twelve and completed training from France in 1927 (Wyatt, 1984). Similarly Pridi Banomyong, the leader of the democratic civilians, was born in a peasant family and won the government scholarship to study law in France and became one of the leaders in the 1932 revolution. While Phibun and Pridi came from commoner backgrounds, Khuang was a private student who went to study engineering in France at the same time. All three of these Thai students frequently met at a Chinese restaurant in the Latin Quarter in Paris to discuss political issues, which eventually led to the major turning point of Thai history in June 1932 (Anon., 2002). Phibun occupied the seat of the Prime Minister twice from 1938 to 1944, and again from 1948 to 1957. Pridi took several important positions in the government including: the Prime Minister of the first civilian government in 1946, Minister of Foreign Affairs in the pre Second World War period, Minister of Finance at the beginning of the war, and King Ananda's regent from 1942 to 1946 (Wyatt, 1984). There seemed to have been a conflict of contesting ideologies between Phibun and Pridi, in which one was a cunning military man, while the other was a believer in civil democracy.

[28] He is known as Phibun in most English sources.

Nevertheless, it was the modest Khuang who was called in to take the office of Prime Minister four times between 1944 and 1948 and was the major founder of the Democrat Party in 1946. Even when Phibun's popularity declined, Khuang was the trusted choice for both Japan and the *Seri Thai* (who were working as an underground group of the Allies) to take the Prime Minister's seat toward the end of the Second World War.

Given that these politicians were prominent in Thai politics, the roles of their wives, which has been overlooked in previous studies, will be emphasised in the following part of this chapter. The three case studies of La-iad Phibunsongkhram (Phibun's wife), Lekha Aphaiwong (Khuang's wife), and Phoonsuk Banomyong (Pridi's wife), will demonstrate the pivotal roles of wives of politicians in the public sphere. The first case study that this chapter will approach is the agent of nationalism, La-iad Phibunsongkhram.

Agent of Nationalism: La-iad Phibunsongkhram

Figure 7.3 La-iad Phibunsongkhram in Washington D.C. in 1955 (Jirawat, 1997)

Apart from the Victorian era modernity, nationalism also played an influential part in the representations of elite women of themselves. The use of terms such as *botbat* (role) and *phara-nathi* (responsibility) emphasised the social expectations of women in the public sphere in the era of growing nationalism, which led to the emergence of the new elite group of women--- the wives of politicians. *Than-phuying* La-iad Phibunsongkhram (figure 7.3) was one of the most active female state agents, who was involved in a number of social propaganda-making activities during Phibun's nationalist regime. The story of *Than-phuying* La-iad emphasises both the role and responsibility of women. She took on the dual role of a noble wife in her household and an inspiring, enthusiastic, nation-devoted woman in her public scene as the wife of the Prime Minister and a female politician (Krom Sinlapakon, 2004).

Personal Life

Than-phuying is a title equals to 'lady', which La-iad was granted when her husband, Phibun, became Prime Minister.[29] La-iad Phankrawi (her maiden name) was born on 25 October 1903 in Nakhonpathom Province, during the reign of King Chulalongkorn. At the age of 14, she married Phibun, who was then an army cadet with a promising future. As Phibun's career was rising, La-iad's role became more influential in Thai society. Being the wife of a leader who took the country through the difficult wartime as Phibun, La-iad's life deserves further study. The biography of *Thanphuying* La-iad underlines a significant change in the role of modern women who had to fulfil roles in both the domestic and the

[29] *Than-phuying* is a title for wives of *chao phraya* or married women who are rewarded by the highest insignia given by the king (Ratchabandittayasathan, 1999, p 524).

public spheres. La-iad successfully played both the roles of a good wife in the domestic sphere and as good citizen in the public sphere.

La-iad lived for eighty years to witness a number of changes in Thai history and even created part of history herself as an agent of nationalist modernity. She entered the inner court to learn the good manners of a lady, lived through the revolution of 1932, and became the number one lady in 1938 when she was actively involved in the drafting of *ratthaniyom* with regard to women. La-iad played her role as a devoted wife and as a good role model for modern women of the nationalist regime. Her appearances in public challenged the traditional representations of the earlier high-class women. She often appeared in public scenes standing shoulder-to-shoulder with Phibun, which opposed the traditional idea that being a wife is to serve as the *chang thao-lang* (hind-legs of the elephant). Her elegant manners revolutionised representations of modern women in the nationalist era. Even Phibun called her *phuean ruam chiwit*, or 'life-companion', which demonstrates the equal status he gave to his wife (Jirawat, 1997, p 20). As a life-companion of an influential politician at a crucial time in Thai history, La-iad proved that she was a devoted wife for her husband through all the assassination attempts and political exiles.

The biography of La-iad Phibunsongkhram describes how her husband survived three assassination attempts, in February 1934, November, and December 1938, respectively (Jirawat, 1997, p 21). This was the reason why La-iad had to always be by his side and pay attention to every detail of her husband's routine. Food, in particular, was La-iad's major concern. In December 1938, Phibun almost died from food poisoning at his mansion within the military controlled zone. After that, La-iad took full charge of all daily meals with only a little help from trusted wives of other high-ranking military officers. Moreover, when Phibun was accused of being a war criminal after the Second World War

ended, La-iad never left his side. For all five months that Phibun was jailed, La-iad visited him every day to deliver his meals. Later, the couple decided to migrate to Japan and stayed there until 1964 when Phibun passed away from heart failure (Jirawat, 1997, p 105). This evidence represents La-iad as a true modern woman and wife. She demonstrates the new active role of wives. Unlike the previous era when *chaochom* were kept only within the inner court, La-iad made her appearances always by her husband's side. Even Queen Saowapha, who acted as the king's regent during Chulalongkorn's visit to Europe, did not portray herself as equal to the king, as La-iad did with Phibun. The queen would never have stood side-by-side with the king. As La-iad successfully played the role of a devoted wife in the domestic sphere, her responsibilities in the public sphere increasingly highlighted her popularity, especially in politics.

Political Role

Figure 7.4 (from left to right) Lieutenant Colonel La-iad, Field Marshal Phibun, Officer Aspirant Jirawat Phibunsongkhram (Jirawat, 1997)

Thanphuying La-iad Phibunsongkhram fully entered into the public sphere by taking significant roles in both the military and politics. Even prior to the Second World War, she was one of the prominent figures who helped draft the Cultural Mandates (which will be the focus of the next part of this chapter). However, this part of the chapter will concentrate on accomplishments that La-iad achieved in her career in politics and the military. In 1942, La-iad was appointed as a lieutenant colonel of the army (figure 7.4). With the government's recruitment scheme for female cadets, the Supreme Commander Phibun stated that, "the most vital force in guarding the nation is the military without any gender barrier between males and females...the wise way that our ancestors had chosen. Therefore, our nation is in need of building the female military force. As a result, we must first have female officers who can train these new recruited female cadets to achieve their goal" (Jirawat, 1997, p 252). As a lieutenant colonel in the army, she was highly involved in the recruitment and training of the first generation of female cadets. In her speech upon the completion of the training of the first female cadet class in 1943, La-iad stated,

> Now that you, my daughters, have completed the army training, I believe that you could handle heavy tasks as good as any man can. You can carry guns; shoot those enemies who do harm to our nation...(Jirawat, 1997, p 262).

From this statement, Lieutenant Colonel La-iad had given the message as a mother would to children, which demonstrates her influential status in the female cadet academy at the time.

Apart from her military career, La-iad was also highly involved in politics. She was elected as a senator twice, in 1949 and 1950. In the crucial year of 1957, she won a seat as a member of parliament from Nakhonnayok Province, but the coup on 16 September of

1957 drove Prime Minister Phibun and her into exile for six months after the election. During the years when La-iad occupied a seat in parliament as a senator and played the role of the number one lady, she encouraged women to exercise their political rights by setting herself as a role model. In a speech on 28 February 1955, at the Council of Women's Culture , La-iad stressed the following three rights of Thai women (i) the right to vote; (ii) the right to run for elections and all other public campaigns; and (iii) the right to political positions and to perform public tasks (Jirawat, 1997, p 479). La-iad's role in poltitics earned her an international reputation. She was elected as President of the World Federation of United Nations Associations in 1956, which had brought Thailand closer to the Western camp of the Cold War after SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation) was formed in Bangkok one year earlier. From the mentioned evidence, La-iad was more than the number one lady of the progressive Thai nation; she also served as an influential military and political figure. These roles clearly sharpen the image of modern Thai woman so that they were no longer excluded from the public sphere.

Cultural Role

The true legacy of *Thanphuying* La-iad Phibunsongkhram was her role in the cultural realm. As the country was moving toward the era of hyper-nationalism, the government saw the need to include women into the new development scheme. As a result, *sapha watthanatham haeng-chat,* or the National Council of Culture, was founded in 1942 with La-iad as the head of the women's committee (Krom Sinlapakon, 2004). This foundation then led to the emergence of the Women Cultural Society at the provincial level all over the country. This was when La-iad had set herself as a role model for the new elite group of women. Wives of mayors and high-ranking government officers were encouraged

to join this society. La-iad also often made appearances in public. This gave her the opportunity to promote the popular woman's fashion as according to the Cultural Mandates. Nevertheless, she was more than a fashion model of the modern elite women; La-iad had also become an influential figure in the promotion of nationalist culture which included literature and famous recreational activities, such as the *ram-wong* dance--the folk dance that had been standardised by Phibun's regime.

La-iad mastered in literature. She was appointed as one of the members of language reform committee, founded during the Second World War. Moreover, she often wrote poems to broadcast on the national radio accompanying the Prime Minister's nationalistic stories and New Year's speeches. As nationalism played the major theme in the political atmosphere, La-iad's works in literature served to further promote this popular sentiment. Her poems are often about women and their duties to families and the nation. Flowers were employed as symbols for women. In one of her famous poems, *klon wan mae* (Mother's Day poem), she compares mothers to jasmines in the way that they are beautiful flowers of great use, "While they are young, we can turn them into beautiful white garlands. When they withered, we can turn them into herbal medicines" (Krom Sinlapakon, 2004, p 271). Therefore, there seemed to be no other types of flowers that can resemble mothers as well as jasmine, which has been used as a symbol for mothers since the day the poem was written on 15 April 1948 until the present day. Another flower that the author used to represent women was the lotus. Thai women had, according to La-iad, great values as did lotuses that people offer to the Lord Buddha. Women belong in the higher place in the society as lotuses belong on the high shelves where people make offerings to the Lord Buddha (Jirawat, 1997, p 336). These poems demonstrate the author's will to enhance the

status of women in the society, which corresponded to the state's policy in the hyper-nationalist period.

La-iad's poems were well known throughout the literate class of people, yet her contribution to the new state's recreational activity proved to be more widely popular. *Ram-wong* was a recreational dance that developed from *ram-thon,* a traditional group dance that originated in the Central region of Thailand.[30] The songs that are used in this performance have simple, but playful lyrics. Hence, *ram-thon* served as an effective way to promote government campaigns to villagers and the less literate populations. As a consequence, the government under Phibun transformed *ram-thon* into *ram-wong* in 1944 (Ammara, 2010, p 176). *Krom Sinlapakon* (The Department of Arts) had standardised the dance movements for ten newly composed *ram-wong* songs, six of which were written by La-iad. The lyrics of *ram-wong* songs that La-iad wrote were built around the same nationalist theme, similar to her other literary works. One example of a song that she composed was "Thai Women of Kind Hearts" (*Ying Thai Chai Ngam*), which contains a convincing message that women are an important force in the success of the nation, "Beloved Thai women support the nation with their exquisite beauty and bravery" (Jirawat, 1997, p 389). This part of the lyrics directly aimed to promote nationalism amongst the female audience. A similar message can be seen in "Flowers of The Nation" (*Dok Mai Khong Chat*). The lyrics of this song praise the beauty of women who uphold the government's policies and support the nation-building process (Jirawat, 1997, p 393). This dedication to the nation, hence, is the true beauty and women are regarded as flowers of the nation. "Thai women of Kind Hearts" and "Flowers of The Nation" are two out of six songs that La-iad wrote for the Public Relations Department prior to the Second World War. Two interesting innovative ideas

[30] *Thon* was a core percussion instrument of *ram-thon.*

sprang from these works. First, the intended audiences of theses songs were women. In other words, *ram-wong* clearly was gendered in its lyrics, although the performance includes both men and women to dance in pairs. The songs encourage women to think of themselves as equal subjects to men who could support the nation as well as men. Second, the class barrier does not play any roles here as all women are considered as "Flowers of The Nation". La-iad had successfully implanted nationalist sentiments into popular audiences regardless of their literacy limitations. These *ram-wong* songs became a popular recreation at the village level up to the national level. During the Second World War, government officials were encouraged to perform *ram-wong* in official parties, which harmoniously supported the nationalistic policy of the government in the early 1940's. In addition, the ten *ram-wong* songs are still included in the national school curriculum, where nationalism is being successfully implanted in the minds of both male and female students (Ammara, 2010, p 176).

Agent of Cultural Mandates (Ratthaniyom): Lekha Aphaiwong

Figure 7.5 Lekha Aphaiwong (Lekha, 1983)

Lekha Aphaiwong (figure 7.5) was one of the most interesting public female figures in Thai history in the post-revolution era whose achievements have been overlooked by the mainstream Thai historiography. Her role had changed dramatically following her husband's rising career in politics, especially during the years of the Cultural Mandates from 1938 to 1942. She had worked closely with La-iad in the Committee to Establish Correct Names (*Khana-kammakan chat rabiap chue*) that was founded in 1939. As part of the language reform in one of the themes of the Cultural Mandates, Lekha's role in this committee was to correct and establish names that fit gender roles. In the following part of this chapter, Lekha's memoir that was distributed at her cremation will be a central material to the analysis of her role as a public female figure.

Personal life

Lekha's father was one of the foreign legal advisors who worked at the court of King Rama the Fifth. She was born in a big family of twelve siblings from different mothers. Her mother passed away when Lekha was very small and was not mentioned in her writing. A few women who were important to her childhood were Plaek, who was her nanny, and her elder sister, Yai. Both of them took care and acted as mothers to Lekha throughout her childhood. Apart from these two women, Lekha's father William Alfred Tilleke (born 1860, died 1917) was also one of the most influential people in her life. She stated in her memoir, "My father was a lawyer....so he taught me to be just and honest with others" (Lekha, 1983, p 21). William Alfred Tilleke, whose origin was Ceylon, was the General Director of Public Prosecution Department and was given the surname Khunadilok by King Vajiravudh. The family had been one of the powerful foreign elite families of Siam.

With this elite background, all Lekha's siblings were trained at the best possible institutions and even the daughters were not the exception for getting a good education. As a young girl, Lekha received an elite education from institutions within Siam and overseas. In Siam, she went to St-Joseph Convent, Wang Lang School, Rachini School, and the inner court (*fai nai*). After completing her secondary education, she travelled to Ceylon, England, and France to pursue further education and language skills (Lekha, 1983). This highlights the contrast between Lekha and La-iad. While Lekha had the best available education for a woman at that time, La-iad, who came from a middle-class family background, did not have the same opportunities. Lekha's childhood had been disciplined after her father passed away at the age of eleven, as she was sent to the inner court where Princess Wilai-alongkon, a daughter of King Rama the Fifth, became Lekha's new guardian. In the inner court, Lekha learned all the good qualities of the ideal Siamese lady as she wrote,

> Entering the palace, I lived amongst a number of *kunlasatri*.... I learned to work flowers...arrange the dining table...and learned to be proud to have an honour to live close to the nobles in a sacred place as the royal palace. (Lekha, 1983, p 26)

From Lekha's description of her inner court life, the training in the traditional values of a lady and the implantation of romantic ideas about royalism had disciplined the young elite of foreign origin to become the proper lady that the society of the time expected. However, Lekha's education was interrupted again when her uncle, *Phraya* Singhonsakhon, decided to send her, together with his children Praphai and Prasit, to study in Ceylon. After her first journey began, she continued to travel to England and finally in 1926 she arrived in Paris in the company of her elder sister Dang Khunadilok. It was on 14 July 1926, the National Day of France, that Lekha met with Khuang Aphaiwong, an ambitious Thai student who was

going to become another prominent political leader of Thai politics. Lekha Khunadilok and Khuang Aphaiwong started their lives as a couple in May 1932, only one month before the revolution. As a wife, she was a conservative one who always addressed her husband with the title *khun* (a formal title for males and females). This reflects the conservativeness of Lekha who believed in the hierarchy within the family. Nonetheless, her role in the public sphere was completely different from her private life. Lekha's public role as a wife of a politician is discussed below.

Public role

Lekha's life changed quite dramatically from being a wife of a government civil servant to being the wife of a Prime Minister. After Lekha returned from Europe, she became a teacher at St. Mary Mission School where she taught until 1932 when she married and Khuang requested that she quit her job for the reason that she had "enough work as a housewife" (Lekha, 1983, p 39). Nevertheless, her abilities went beyond the tasks of the housewife. With her language skills and her well-trained manners, Lekha earned respect from other politicians in the same era. This was the reason that Lekha had become a trusted work partner of La-iad Phibunsongkhram in the Committee to Establish and Correct Names, established in 1939 as part of the Cultural Mandates' promotion campaign. This was the time when she changed her name from Lek[31]to Lekha[32], which has a more feminine meaning as encouraged by the state under the Cultural Mandates.

Apart from Lekha's significant contribution to the Committee of Name Order, she also took a number of important roles in politics. Lekha was one of the first two female

[31] The term means small

[32] The term means writing, drawing, design, or pattern. In addition, the term is also used as a short form of the word 'lekhanukan', which means secretary.

senators in the history of Thailand. Both Lekha and La-iad were nominated to the senate in 1950, which highlights the women's role in the upper house for the first time (The Secretariat of the Senate, n.d.). Moreover, she later entered the house of parliament in 1968 as a member of Prachathipat party that Khuang had founded (Lekha, 1983: Sapha satri haeng chat, 1978). In addition to Lekha's political career, her social work was also noteworthy. She founded and led a number of social organisations, such as the National Council of Women (*sapha satri haeng chat*), the Council of Social Work (*sapha sangkhom songkhro*), and the Educational Support Foundation for the Blind (*Munlanithi chuay lae hai kan sueksa khon tabot*). All of these mentioned organisations demonstrate Lekha's significant role as a social worker and a leading feminist of the post-absolutist era.

A Role Model of Modern Woman in the Democratic Era: Phoonsuk Banomyong

Figure 7.6 Phoonsuk Banomyong (Wanchai, n.d.)

Phoonsuk Banomyong (figure 7.6) or Phoonsuk Na Pomphet (her maiden name) demonstrated her unique strengths and idealistic way of life in her written works of which none of the women in her generation shared the same character. She was born in an aristocratic family in 1912 and was given the name 'Phoonsuk' by King Rama the Sixth. Her father, *Luang* Wichitsorakrai, was a governor of Samutprakan City when his wife, *Khunying* Pheng, gave birth to the third daughter of the Na Pomphet family (Anon., 2002). The given name from King Vajiravudh, 'Phoonsuk', means full of happiness. Besides its good meaning, the fact that the king named her highlights that Phoonsuk was from an elite origin. While Phoonsuk's close ancestors were descended from the ruling class, her husband, Pridi Banomyong, was born into a peasant family. Pridi, or *Luang* Praditmanutham, was a young educated lawyer who completed a law degree from France. He was one of the most controversial politicians in Thai history, especially during the crucial transitional period between 1932 and 1947. Although Phoonsuk was not officially involved in politics as other politicians' wives, Pridi's political ideology had influenced her greatly. From her own voice, another active democratic female figure in Thai history is being discovered.

Personal Life

Phoonsuk's childhood followed the similar pattern of other elite women of the same era. Education was an important part of her life. She enrolled at St-Joseph Convent School at the age of six for the preparatory class. Phoonsuk remembered her school years very well as she described, "St-Joseph Convent had around two hundred students when I first enrolled in 1918....I went to the same class as my second sister Sari... At that time the school offered two different language programs, English and French. I enrolled for the

English program" (Anon., 2002, p 14). Phoonsuk attended St-Joseph Convent School until she completed level seven, where she learned English, French, and piano skills from *mae-dam.*[33] Phoonsuk established a strong bond with St-Joseph Convent and Alliance Française, where she continued her French classes after she left St- Joseph Covent in order to get married. At Alliance Française, Phoonsuk made acquaintance with Chamgat Phalangkul and Puay Ungphakon, both of whom served as leading members of Seri Thai movements for liberation from Japan during the Second World War. From this point, Phoonsuk's educational background demonstrates that she was a woman of Victorian era skills. She went through Western-style training at St-Joseph Convent and Alliance Française and earned European language skills, Western manners, and arts, which were all central to the ideal of women of the Victorian age. Even when she had to quit school, she expressed her regrets for not being able to complete her study or to continue on to university (Phoonsuk, 1992). Getting married at the age of seventeen was a suitable age for women of that era. However, Phoonsuk's regret at her loss of education demonstrated that she was putting herself outside the constructed frame of traditional Siamese women. Phoonsuk remembered all of her teachers. In her memoir, she listed all the teachers who taught her at St-Joseph Convent and at Alliance Française. Moreover, she kept a strong bond with the *mae-dam* at the convent such that she even trusted to leave her two daughters with the sisters while she had to flee abroad with Pridi in political exile from 1932 to 1934. Phoonsuk mentioned,

> *Mae-dam* of St-Joseph Convent School had a great understanding of my family. During the difficult time when my family was threatened by politics, *mae-dam* teachers at St-Joseph Convent took great care of my children....and I will always feel grateful for what they have done for us (Anon., 2002, p 17).

[33] Thai adopted French word, *madame*, for Catholic nuns.

Nevertheless, of all teachers, Pridi gave her the most valuable lessons in their eventful married life, which Phoonsuk called the 'university of life' or *'mahawitthayalai chiwit'*.

Although Phoonsuk's background is of the elite class, she believed in a simple living style. Her husband had significantly influenced the belief in her chosen way of life. Phoonsuk and Pridi Banomyong got married on 16 November 1928. The life of a seventeen year-old young elite lady was about to change. With Pridi's democratic ideas, his life went through different periods of success and difficulty. Between 1932 and 1947, he acted as one of the major leaders of the revolution in 1932; occupied the seat of Prime Minister; served as the king's regent; and eventually became a political dissident (Anon., 2002). Pridi's political ideologies had a great influence on Phoonsuk. An example is the way she addressed her husband with the title *nai* (as a title of a male commoner). It is unlikely that an elite woman in Thai society would call her husband with this title. Lekha, wife of former Prime Minister Khuang Aphaiwong, used *khun* (a polite and formal title for both men and women) every time she mentioned her husband in her memoir. However, Phoonsuk chose to employ the simplest way to address her husband in her written works by using the commoner's title. Another example of Phoonsuk's egalitarian principles appeared in her letter of 1 October, 1998 that she left to her children, in which she denounced any ranks or titles that she had obtained during her lifetime after she died (Lalita et al, 2008). In fact, Phoonsuk was given an insignia from King Ananda and the title of *Thanphuying* in 1939 (Anon., 2002). Nevertheless, she refused to keep any of them and chose to be known as just another commoner woman after she passed away. Her last words to her children gave the exact instruction for her funeral plan. This letter reflects her unique attitudes of a strong and confident woman who had been through a series of political success and struggles throughout her life. In her letter of 1 October 1998, Phoonsuk instructed her children that

she wanted her funeral to be as simple as possible and she did not want to receive any titles after she died. "There won't be any religious ceremony and do not bother any relatives to attend my funeral", wrote Phoonsuk (Lalita et al, 2008, p 8). From her own words, Phoonsuk demonstrated the dignity of a modern woman with strong democratic principles.

From Than-Phuying To a Rebel, and To an Expatriate

> Thai women must enhance their abilities in all aspects in order to be able to take responsible positions at a national level. Although women are often viewed as sensitive, we can be strong if we assemble our forces together. We can check and balance the management of the government, block corruption or fraud that could harm our husbands' reputation. I think this is a very important element to the development of our nation toward the era where virtue of meritocracy governs (Lalita, et al, 2008, p 10).

The above statement by Phoonsuk was recorded in her cremation volume edited by her children, and explains Phoonsuk's vision on the politics of Siam in a crucial period. The role as the wife of Pridi was a challenging one. After the revolution of 1932, Pridi was charged with the accusation of being a communist, hence, a threat to the government. As a result, the couple decided to flee to France, where Pridi had spent a number of years as a law student in the pre-revolutionary years. In 1934, the couple returned to Thailand, after *Phraya* Phahon Phonphayuhasena seized power from the government of *Phraya* Manopakon Nithithada, who had opposed Pridi's economic plan that caused his first exile in 1933. From then, Pridi's career rose quickly. He occupied a number of important seats in the government, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Finance, and the

Prime Minister. As Pridi's power in the government increased, Phoonsuk's role as the wife of a statesman was also significantly affected. In the statement quoted above, Phoonsuk stressed the potential of women to prevent 'corruption' and 'fraud'. This directly reflects her real experiences with Pridi in politics that caused them to leave Thailand twice in political exile, which will be discussed here.

Although Phoonsuk was never a member of parliament or an official politician, her public role is worth studying as she served as a model for a democratic woman of the modern era. Phoonsuk participated in the *Seri Thai* movement during the Second World War and travelled overseas with Pridi after the war ended. She described in her article 'My Life during War and Peace' (*chiwit khong khaphachao nai yam songkhram lae santiphap*) that the Council of Ministers had split opinions about entering the Second World War. One party wanted to compromise with Japan by entering the war on the side of the Axis and the other wanted to defend Thai sovereignty by declaring war on Japan (Anon., 2002). Pridi was a leading supporter of the second opinion to resist the Japanese occupation in Thailand. Nevertheless, Prime Minister Phibun made the decision to announce a cease-fire and allowed Japanese troops in Thai territory. Finally, Thailand declared war on the Allies on 25 January, 1942. Pridi left his seat as Minister of Finance and took the position of King Ananda's regent in the same year. While Japan was enjoying the satisfaction that Pridi was no longer in the Council of Ministers, Pridi took this moment to initiate the *Seri Thai* movement to liberate the country by allying with the United States and Great Britain. At this point, Phoonsuk became one of the members of the *Seri Thai.*

> My major task was to help Pridi follow the news on foreign radio in order to keep up with the Allies' movements...as well as to accommodate members of *Seri Thai* at our Tha Chang mansion that was then serving as an office of *Seri Thai* (Anon., 2002, p 53).

The war finally ended with the victory of the Allies. As a result, Pridi became immensely popular. Phoonsuk, as the wife of a war hero, had the chance to travel overseas with her husband as honourable guests in a number of Allied countries, such as Great Britain, China, the Philippines, and the United States. The photographs of the couple in formal receptions with the world's politicians highlighted the international reputation the couple had earned. Phoonsuk appeared side by side with Pridi in modern Western outfits throughout their journey. Even the past queens had never been seen the way Phoonsuk was seen in the international public. The equal status that Pridi had given to his wife highlighted the new image for a democratic wife of a politician in the modern era.

Thanphuying Phoonsuk and Prime Minister Pridi Banomyong enjoyed their years of popularity and trust from the royal family until 1946, when the death of King Ananda caused Pridi's good reputation to decline. Pridi became one of the prime suspects of the ambiguous death. In 1950, just a few hours before the military took over the government, Pridi fled to China via Singapore. From the words of Phoonsuk, Pridi left the house in the middle of the night of 8 November without a chance to say goodbye or tell her what was happening. Phoonsuk was left alone with her children when the armed military intruded into the regent's mansion. The following part shows Phoonsuk's description of the night of the coup,

> As soon as I heard the sound of the machine gun shot into the mansion's building, I did not have time to ask anybody where Pridi has gone. I went straight to the children's bedroom to assemble them all in one room.... "Do not shoot, there are only women and children here", I shouted. After a while the sound of the machine gun had stopped and military men marched into the mansion. The lieutenant said to us that they were going to take over the government. "Take over the government. Why here? Why not at the parliament?", I responded (Anon., 2002, p 99).

Phoonsuk demonstrated a great strength in the tough time when her husband had to flee because of politics. She stood up against the military men who were intruding into her house without fear even though she then had no idea where Pridi was. This time Pridi went to China. Phoonsuk, on the other hand, was left in Thailand and was arrested for treason in 1952 (figure 7.7). The same accusation was charged against their 21-year-old son, Pan, who was enrolled as a student at Thammasat University. While Pan was jailed for five years, Phoonsuk was released after 84 days in prison. She then decided to leave her home country as she said, "For everything that had happened to *nai* Pridi, myself, and my children have been unbearable. I feel mentally and physically wounded. And this is why I have decided to leave for France in April 1956" (Anon., 2002, p 127). From this statement, it seems the fraud and corruption of politics became the major factors that influenced Phoonsuk to leave. She felt that the punishment she had was extremely unfair to her and her family as she claimed that she could not even get bail. Freedom for Phoonsuk had become more and more limited for her as Pridi's political enemies grew stronger. The situation suggested that there was no place for justice for Phoonsuk in both the public and private domains. From her writing, the political atmosphere of this period was full of fraud and corruption. As a consequence, she felt no longer the sense of belonging to the country.

Figure 7.7 Phoonsuk Banomyong when she was arrested for treason in 1952 (Wanchai, n.d.)

Even when they were apart, Phoonsuk had never given up her role as a faithful wife. Being left alone and charged as a rebel, she stood up and fought for the rights she thought she deserved. She defended her husband against the accusation of the murder of King Ananda. With evidence of the loyalty the Banomyong family had for the royal family including: Pridi's arrangement for the royal family to stay in Ayutthaya during the Second World War; the family's relationship with King Prajadhipok even after his abdication; a trusted role that he was given by the short-lived King Ananda and his brother, Bhumibol; Phoonsuk was convinced that her husband was a royalist and would never attempt to assassinate the young king. (Pridi, 1972: Anon., 2002). She firmly declared in front of the court that her husband was an innocent subject with respect to the death of King Ananda (Satcha, n.d.). Once again, Phoonsuk's belief in meritocracy had been challenged by the state. By demonstrating that Pridi was a royalist and he had been doing the best in the most difficult time, as he had done in the Second World War, Phoonsuk had hoped that his merits could win over frauds. Nonetheless, the dark forces of Pridi's political opponents

were stronger than Phoonsuk's defence. It took over a decade to prove that Pridi was innocent.

From the day Phoonsuk got married to Pridi in 1928, until the day she decided to leave her mother country in 1956, this elite woman fought with a number of enemies and participated in politics far beyond other elite women of the same generation. Although her works are not as well known as other wives of politicians, such as La-iad Phibunsongkhram, she was a true role model for a democratic woman who strongly believed in the virtue of meritocracy and justice.

Women's Status and Public Roles: the Post-Absolutist Regime

Despite the change in the social concept of elite women that was no longer confined within a small circle of princesses, concubines, and daughters of high ranking aristocrats, who were given the elite status by birth, the study of the three wives of politicians La-iad Phibunsongkhram, Lekha Aphaiwong, and Phoonsuk Banomyong highlights an apparent increase in female roles in politics of the post-absolutist regime. Through the encouragement of their husbands, the three women gradually entered the public sphere in the early years of the constitutional monarchy. The following roles of the wives of politicians underlined the changes in modern Thai women's status.

Firstly, wives of politicians took on major roles as the state agent of nationalist policies. The two parallel revolutions in representations of women in the late nineteenth century and in the late 1930s had demonstrated that women were subjects of the state's promotion of modernity and progress, particularly in the promotion of women's modern

image. As the Victorian-era influences played a significant role in the 'clothing-the-nation' process of Chulalongkorn's inner court, a similar modernising attempt also served as the foundation of the Cultural Mandates under the leadership of Phibun. The women of the inner court were encouraged by the Siamese monarchs to adopt the Victorian era fashion along the same lines that elite men had been guided. The same approach was used in the promotion of the Cultural Mandates several decades later under the post-absolutist, fascist-inspired government of Phibun. Women were also encouraged by the government to dress themselves according to the new cultural norms. Nonetheless, the post-absolutist regime challenged the status of women to a greater extent than the absolutist regime. With the growing nationalist sentiments among male politicians, women became agents of the state's nationalism. La-iad Phibunsongkhram and Lekha Aphaiwong played the key role of government agents during the promotion of the Cultural Mandates. La-iad and Lekha served as major members of the committee to Establish Correct Names in 1939 (Jirawat, 1997: Lekha, 1983). The involvement of the two women in the committee highlights the increase female participation in the promotion of state policy. La-iad, in particular, was a highly influential figure with her works in the promotion of the Cultural Mandates, including writing the lyric of *ram wong* songs, a recreational dance that was popularised and standardised during the Phibun era. By the mid-twentieth century, both La-iad and Lekha had entered the House of Senate. As they became full-time politicians, the space for women in politics had also been expanded.

Secondly, apart from serving as state agents, the wife of a politician, such as Phoonsuk Banomyong, had become an active political activist in the post-absolutist regime. While La-iad and Lekha took major roles in the nationalist promotion, Phoonsuk Banomyong adhered to her egalitarian principles. Pridi Banomyong, Phoonsuk's husband,

was the most influential person in her life. As Pridi led the *Seri Thai,* Phoonsuk played an important role as one of its members. Her contribution to the *Seri Thai* demonstrates the first woman's participation in the underground political movement. Although Phoonsuk knew that she had put her family at risk by working closely with the Allies during the Japanese occupation in the Second World War, she did not fear. Instead, she worked side by side with Pridi until the war ended with the victory of the Allies. Moreover, Phoonsuk's resistance to the military government in the 1950s also highlights a new image of a wife of a politician. While Pridi fled the country because of political tensions, Phoonsuk was arrested with the accusation of treason. She believed in the virtue of her husband even when she was imprisoned on a charge that she did not deserve. As a result, her writings reflect her experiences with the injustice of the military regime. She illustrated an apparent hatred for the corruption and fraud, which she believed to be the reason for her family's exile. Phoonsuk's writing was unlike La-iad's or Lekha's. Her work questioned the reliability of the military government in the way that elite women had never expressed before. At this point, the status of elite women had been enhanced with the growing intensity of politics. They made their public appearances as both the state's agents of nationalist modernity and as political activists for democracy.

The period after the revolution of 1932 highlights the transformation in the representations of women on a wider scale than in the absolutist regime. While the impact of the promotion of *siwilai* in the late nineteenth century affected primarily women of the inner court, the politics of the post-revolutionary period played a significant role in reshaping women's representations regardless of their family backgrounds. The result was the popularisation of the new framework of modern woman among the rising middle-class women and newly emerged class of elite women, which included the educated women and

wives of politicians. The male-dominated spaces, such as the parliament and the underground political groups, became shared domains for both women and men. The three wives of politicians, La-iad Phibunsongkhram, Lekha Aphaiwong, and Phoonsuk Banomyong, demonstrated their active involvement in the public domains. In other words, although Thai official historiography has typically focused on the roles of men, women also had pivotal roles in the politics of the post-absolutist regime. This point, therefore, reflects the state's enhanced recognition of women in the nation-building process.

Conclusion

Thailand's post-revolutionary period dramatically transformed the status of women. The parallel cultural makeovers in the second half of the nineteenth century and the late 1930s brought women from the domestic sphere of wifedom and motherhood to the public sphere, which required a higher level of social responsibilities from them. This chapter demonstrated that in the post-absolutist period of growing nationalism, Thai women were no longer excluded from the public sphere.

From the beginning of the twentieth century, romantic movements became popular. The independence of love and romance was apparent in literature as well as the increased involvement of female authors in Siam's first womens newspapers. The boundary between genders in literature began to disappear. This phenomenon set a new trend for social reform under the leadership of Field Marshal Phibun, who considered women's involvement in the public sphere essential to the nation-building process. Although his intention was not directly to enhance woman's status but rather to manipulate them as tools for state policy,

the new image and role models of modern women emerged in this era. Phibun's wife, La-iad, became a prominent female figure who shaped and represented the concept of being a Thai woman. Her emphasis on the roles (*botbat*) and responsibilities (*phara-nathi*) of women in both the household and in the community granted her immense popularity among the new group of elite women, which mostly comprised the wives of politicians and high-ranking officials. Moreover, her roles in politics, the military, and cultural reform also remarkably transformed the traditional image of women. La-iad presented herself as a devoted wife, popular politician, talented composer, and a role model of modern women. Lekha Aphaiwong, wife of the famous politician Khuang Aphaiwong, was another case study of an active agent of Cultural Mandates (*ratthaniyom*). Lekha was an aristocratic woman who effectively played both domestic and public roles that La-iad had emphasised. She was a loyal housewife and was at the same time, an active public figure. While nationalism had made a major impact on the two above-mentioned women, democratic ideas were central to the public role of another wife of politician, Phoonsuk Banomyong. Meritocracy and justice were the fundamental beliefs of her life. Even though she did not officially enter into politics as La-iad and Lekha did, she made a significant contribution to the Free Thai movement (*Seri Thai*) to liberate Thailand during the Second World War. Moreover, Phoonsuk's written experience as a victim of politically motivated charges also expresses that she was an idealistic and strong woman who was not afriad of unjust accusation. These case studies of three wives of politicians demonstrate that Thai women had pivotal roles in the public sphere. These roles dealt with political, social, and cultural transformations, more remarkably in the post-absolutist period.

Conclusion

This study's primary focus has been to critically explore the previously overlooked voices and roles of women in mainstream and official historical publications. This dissertation challenges the official representations of women by highlighting elite women's enhanced status, roles, and participation in the public sphere from the late absolutist period to the constitutional monarchy era throughout the seven organised chapters.

Major changes in the roles of elite women that occurred during the political and social transitional period between 1868 and 1942 have been covered in this thesis. The first phenomenon considered was the transition in the space for women, which was no longer confined within the inner court. As I have illustrated in chapter II *Fai Nai (Inner City): King Chulalongkorn 1868-1910*, Siamese women entered into the public sphere by taking administrative roles as early as the late nineteenth century during the late absolutist regime. It was in this period that aristocratic women became equipped with skills other than their domestic training in arts and crafts. These skills, including administrative expertise, aided in the organisation of the public female education system from the end of the nineteenth century. Improved access to education resulted in a second major impact on Siamese women's lives, namely, the emergence of a new class of commoner elite women. These literate women, who were not necessarily born into an aristocratic clan, took leading roles in the print industry from the beginning of the post-absolutist period and later on in politics by the end of the 1930s. From the summarised evidence, this thesis concludes here that, as a result of the period of political and social transitions from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries, the level of literacy and skills, rather than class and family

backgrounds, became the determining factors for the emergence of women in the public sphere of modern Siam.

Through presenting critiques of official women's representations, this study found a gap in the historiography that needed to be filled. This study has demonstrated that the so-called 'elite women' were in fact divided into two groups, the aristocratic elites and commoner elites, and the roles and voices of both these groups in the public sphere were more pivotal than has previously been represented by official and mainstream Thai historiography. By focusing on representations of women as obedient followers of men, Thai official and mainstream historiography has tended to ignore the women's voices and roles. While official Thai publications grant some space to the roles and voices of women, this is always limited as the emphasis in representations of women in these works is placed on women's ability to conform to dominant values and images that the nation promoted. The women's duty for the king (under absolutist monarchy) and for the nation (under civilian government), rather than their active roles and agency in the public sphere were the focus of women's representations in Thai official and mainstream historical accounts. For example, Prince Damrong Rajanubhap's works of the absolutist years focused on praising the aristocratic qualities of the king's consorts, while, on the other hand, *Luang* Wichit Watthakan's works in the early post-absolutist era concentrated on the expected roles of women as part of Phibun's nationalist campaign. This gap has been filled by the evidence of the active public roles of women that began to emerge from the nineteenth century.

The findings of this dissertation reflect the above-mentioned argument. The analysis of the historical evidence collected during my fieldwork demonstrates that Siamese women began to emerge in the public sphere by having significant roles in the following four fields: the administration of government, education, print media, and politics. Biographies of

aristocratic women in the cremation volumes compiled by Prince Damrong Rajanubhap revealed that royal elite women took major roles in the administration of the state during the period of bureaucratic and organisational reform of King Chulalongkorn's reign. Official documents and personal memoirs also contributed to the exploration of the early female education of Siamese women. In the print industry, volumes of early women's magazines gave a significant voice to women of both the aristocratic and commoner backgrounds. And finally, women's prominent roles in politics have been revealed through the examination of biographies of politician's wives in the post-absolutist period.

Apart from highlighting the significant voices and roles of women in the public sphere from 1868 to 1942, these findings also demonstrated the competition that emerged between the aristocratic and commoner women during Siam's political and social transitions. These two groups of women began to contest their respective roles and voices as early as the 1920s. Education was the key factor that contributed to the enhanced position of commoner women, as both publicly funded and private female schools were opened in urban areas from the beginning of the twentieth century (see chapter III *Early Female Education in Siam: 1870-1910*). This eventually led to the rise of the roles and voices of commoner elite women. While the positions of aristocratic women faced a decline in the reign of King Vajiravudh, commoner women took leading roles in the place of aristocratic women in the women's print media industry of the late 1920s and later on in politics of the Phibun nationalist regime. This evidence fills another gap in previous works on Thai women's history. While official and mainstream historiography overlooked the competition between aristocratic and commoner women, this issue was fundamental to this study.

The source materials collected during my fieldwork can also lead to possible future studies of Thai women's history. The women's magazines, used as the core source materials in chapter V *The Rise of Women's Print Media: Competing Women's Voices in the Pre-revolutionary Years 1906-1932,* offer images and advertisements that could be further studied in relation to women's consumerist culture. A similar approach is seen in the work of Chie Ikeya (2011), which explored women's consumer habits as part of her examination of modern women (*khit kala*) in colonial Burma by looking at both official and popular media and documents in both vernacular Burmese and English produced between 1920 and 1940. Ikeya's work is set in the same period as this thesis, which has already shown how the bourgeois class had become a significant group of urban Bangkokians who were well equipped with capital by the 1920s. The women of the bourgeois class, therefore, had the capability to spend on consumer goods, as consumer habits of the Siamese modern girl (*sao samai*) could also be seen through source materials collected during the fieldwork. This additional topic on women's consumerist culture could potentially contribute to further the study of women's history in the future.

Ultimately, I hope that this research complements the understanding of Thai women's position in the contemporary period. Only a few decades after the revolution of 1932, Thai society witnessed the rising roles of Siamese women in politics. Apart from the growing number of women representatives in the House of Parliament as mentioned in chapter VII *Re-entering the Public Sphere: Wartime and Post-war Roles of Thai Women,* the number of female voters had become as high as 40 per cent of all votes in the election of 15 December, 1957 (klum phuean ying, 1983). This illustrates that Siamese women had gradually increased their political participation in the public sphere. I am not trying to argue that women have completely liberated themselves from the influence of men, but the

result of this study complements our understanding of the active roles of elite women in Thailand today. Modern Thai women earned their social status and confidence, not only through their surnames taken from their husbands, but just as much through their skills. As a result of this, to be a modern elite Thai woman is not determined by birth or by the ascription of labels, such as *phudi* (noble person) or *kunlasatri* (women of good birth and breeding), but rather by their level of education and career achievements. The participation of elite women of both aristocratic and commoner backgrounds in the public sphere, and the competition that emerged between them in various discussed domains, led to the development of the redefinition of elite women, which concentrated on their abilities. This is the significant discovery that this study hopes to contribute to the field of Thai women's history.

Bibliography

Archival Records

National Archives of Thailand

(S.) *Education Rama V [sueksathikan]*

M R. 5 S/17 *Sunanthalai Girls' School [rong-rian-satri sunanthalai]*

M R. 5 S. 1/5 *Department of Education: the complete official records [betset ratchakan nai krom sueksa]*

(S T.) *Cultural Mandates [Ratthaniyom]*

S T. 15.2.1/6 *Cultural Mandates and the Related Documents [ratthaniyom lae ekkasan thi kiawkhong]*

S T. 15.2.1/13 *Dress Codes of Thai Women [kan-taengkai khong satri-thai]*

S T. 15.2.1/20 *The Importance of The Fostering of the National Culture [khwam-samkhan nai kan-bamrungwatthanatham khong chat]*

Serials (in Thai)

Bamrung-nari, 1906

Thianwan (1906, April 1). *Bamrung-nari 1- 4.*

Kunlasatri, 1906

Chanthramat (1906, April). Introduction [khamnam]. *Kunlasatri, 1*(1).

Sangwanphet (1906, April). Roles of Women [nathi khong ying]. *Kunlasatri, 1*(1).

Kratai-nai-wong-duean (1906, June). Administration [kan-pokkhrong]. *Kunlasatri, 1*(3).

Mae-ban kan-ruean, 1953-1954

La-iad Phibunsongkhram (1953, May). Women and the Nation [ying kap prathet chat]. *Mae-ban kan-ruean, 1*(1).

Lekha Aphaiwong (1954, February). For Women [phuea satri]. *Mae-ban kan-ruean, 2*(20).

Nari-khasem, 1926

Bannathikanrini (1926, October 1). Message of the Chief (woman) Editor [watha bannathikanrini], *1*(1).

Khrueawan Chumsai Na Ayutthaya (1926, October 1). Danger of a Young Woman [phai khong ying-sao]. *Nari-khasem, 1*(1).

Nari-nat, 1931

Por. Cho. (1931, January 12). How Should We Call Our Spouses? [rao khuan riak khukhrong khong rao wa yang rai di?]. *Nari-nat, 2*(4).

Phitsawong (1931, March 12). Society [samakhom]. *Nari-nat, 2*(7).

Nari-nithet, 1926

Mae Chusi (1926, November 1). The Devil Marriage [wiwa pisat]. *Nari-nithet, 1*(1).

Net-nari, 1932-1933

Suphapsatri (1932, September 1). That Which Cannot Be Chosen [sing thi lueak mai dai]. *Net-nari, 1*(2).

Philai (1933, September 15). First One in Siam [khon raek khong Siam]. *Net-nari, 1*(3).

Phrikthai (1933,). Should Thai Men Have Only One Wife? [chai thai khuan mi mia khon diaw?]. *Net-nari, 1*(3).

Khana (1933, October 1). Interview [samphat]. *Net-nari, 1*(4).

Kanyayon (1933, October 15). Interview [samphat]. *Net-nari, 1*(5).

Loetkrai (1933, October 15). Women as District Representatives [suphapsatri pen phu-thaen tambon]. *Net-nari, 1*(5).

Satri niphon, 1914

"Dressing Style" [kan-taengtua]. (1914, October 14). *Satri niphon, 1*(1).

"Do Not Underestimate Women" [ya pramat satri]. (1914, October 14). *Satri niphon, 1*(1-2)

Khana Satri niphon (1914, October 14). Introduction [khamnam]. *Satri niphon, 1*(1).

"Modern Women" [ying samai-mai]. (1914, October 14). *Satri niphon, 1*(1).

"Problems of Female Education" [panha rueang kan sueksa khong satri]. (1914, October14). *Satri niphon, 1*(1).

"Roles of Wives" [nathi khong phanraya]. (1914, October 14). *Satri niphon, 1*(1).

Satri-san, 1948

Chinda Sukhonthaket (1948). The Economic Victory of Thai Women [chaichana khong ying-thai nai dan setthakit]. *Satri-san, 1*(1).

Pla-mo (1948). Should women enter into politics? [phu-ying khuan len kan-muang?]. *Satri-san, 1*(1).

Satri thai, 1925-1926

Banchong. (1925, March 1). Pinching and Scratching [thang yik thang khuan]. *Satri-thai, 1*(1).

Wo. So. Nethibandit. (1926, July, 12). The Explanation of the Marriage Law [kham athibai kotmai phua-mia]. *Satri-thai, 1*(19).

Satri-that, 1983

Klum pheuan ying (1983). Feminism: from the first step until today [Feminism: chak kao raek chon theung wanni]. *Satri-that, 1*(3), 28-45.

Suphap-nari, 1931

Sichan (1931, March 14). The Female Bandit Leader [Chom Chori]. *Suphap-nari.*

Watthana Witthaya, 1909

"New term" [khammai] (1909, May). *Watthana Witthaya Magazine, 15*(2).

"Obligations for Women" [kit satri samrap satri]. (1909, May). *Watthana witthaya, 15*(2).

Suwan (1909, July, August). Journey to Chiangmai [rayathang chiangmai]. *Watthana witthaya, 15*(4,5).

Suwan (1909, October). Journey to the United States [raya thang pai prathet amerika]. *Watthana witthaya, 15*(7).

Books, Theses, Articles, Speech, and Web Sources

(in English and Thai)

Ammara Klamcharoen (2010). *Songs and Folk Culture [phleng lae kan-lalen-phueanban].* Bangkok: Odien Store.

Amphon Jirattikorn (2003). Suriyothai: hybridizing Thai national identity through film. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies, 4* (2), 296-308.

Anake Nawigamune (1999). *Siamese Women [ying chao sayam].* Bangkok: Saengdaet Press.

Anonymous (1983). *Biography of Chaochom Sadap Ladawan of King Rama V [prawat chaochom mom-ratchawong sadap ladawan nai ro. ha].* Bangkok: Amarin Printing.

Anonymous (2000). *The Writings of Elite Women of Bangkhunphrom Palace [phraniphon khong phraratchawong fai nai khong wang bangkhunphrom].* Bangkok: Letlak Printing.

Anonymous (2002). *The 101st anniversary of Pridi and 90th anniversary of Phoonsuk [101 pi Pridi-90 pi Phoonsuk].* Bangkok: Papyrus Publications.

Anonymous (2010). *Phikunkaew, 105th Anniversary of Rachini School and 80th Anniversary of Rachini-bon School [phikun-kaew: 105 pi rachini 80 pi rachini-bon].* Bangkok: Amarin Printing and Publishing.

Arwut Teeraeak (2014). *The Siamese State's Mangaement of the English Language Education in the Reign of King Chulalongkorn [kan chatkan kan-sueksa phasa angkrit khong rat-sayam nai samai somdetphra Chunlachomklaochaoyuhua]* (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation), Chulalongkorn University, Thailand.

Baanmaha (2009). *History: Princess Naphaphonprapha [prawattisat: phraongchao Naphaphonprapha].* Retrieved February 5, 2015, from http://www.baanmaha.com/community/thread28500.html

Barmé, Scot (1993). *Luang Wichit Wathakan and the Creation of a Thai identity.* Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Barmé, Scot (2002). *Woman, Man, Bangkok: Love, sex, and Popular Culture in Thailand.* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Chanan Yothong (2013). *'Nai nai' in the Reign of King Vajiravudh [nai nai samai ratchakan thi hok].* Bangkok: Matichon.

Charuphan Sapbamrung (2007). *The Influence of the Western Accoutrements on the Elite Women's fashion of Suan Sunantha [itthiphon khong khrueang-taengkai tawantok thi mi to kan-taengkai khong chaonai fai nai wang suan sunantha]* (Research Report). Available from ThaiLIS Thai Academic Reference Database.

Chawiwan Suwannarat (1998). *Princess Suphankanlaya [Phra Suphankanlaya].* Retrieved February 2, 2015, from http://saney.fortunecity.ws/kalaya/kalaya.htm

Chongchitthanom Diskul (2007). *The Memoir [banthuek khwam songcham].* Bangkok: Samnakphim Siam.

Chulalongkorn (1954). *The Writings of King Chulalongkorn and Stories about General Secretary of the Inner Court [phra ratchahatthalekha phrabatsomdet Phrachunlachomklao-chaoyuhua rueang khong somdet-athibodi fai nai].* Bangkok: Mahamongkut Ratchawitthayalai.

Copeland, Matthew (1993). *Contested Nationalism and the 1932 Overthrow of the Absolutist Monarchy in Siam* (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation), The Australian National University, Australia.

Damrong Rajanubhap (1929). *Legend of the Royal Consort's Nursery [tamnan rong-liang-dek khong phra akkhara-chaya-thoe].* Bangkok: Rong-phim Sophonphiphatthanakon.

Damrong Rajanubhap (1938). *Biography of Chaochom Thapthim of Rama V [prawat chaochom-manda Thapthim nai ratchakan thi ha].* Bangkok: Phrachan Press.

Darani Sihathai (2008). *The First Queen Regent of Siam ['somdet-regent' phra-ong raek nai sayam]* (M.A. Thesis). Available from ThaiLIS Thai Academic Reference Database.

Dokmaisot (1933). *Three Men [sam chai].* Bangkok: Khlang Witthaya.

Dokmaisot (1934a). *The Accident [ubattihet].* Bangkok: Khlang Witthaya.

Dokmaisot (1934b). *One of A Hundred [neung nai roi].* Bangkok: Khlang Witthaya.

Dokmaisot (1937). *Good People [phudi].* Bangkok: Khlang Witthaya.

Dokmaisot (1949). *The Last Work of Fiction [wannakam chin sutthai]*. Bangkok: Khlang Witthaya.

Donsak Community Library (n.d.). *The Monument of Princess Vibhavadi Rangsit [anusawari phrachao warawongthoe phraongchao Vibhavadi Rangsit]*. Retrieved February 2, 2015, from http://surat.nfe.go.th/lib10/modules.php?name=Content&pa=showpage&pid=35

Dutsadi Sanlayachiwin (1993). *The Royal Cremation of Colonel Pha-op Posakritsana [anuson nai kan phraratchathan phloengsop phantri-ying khunying Pha-op Posakritsana]*. Bangkok: Amarin Printing and Publishing.

Edwards, Louise. & Roces, Mina. (2004). *Women's Suffrage in Asia: Gender, Nationalism and Democracy*. Routledge Curzon: London.

Ellul, Jacques (1973). *Propaganda: The Formations of Men's Attitudes*. New York: Vintage Books.

Embassy of Japan in Thailand (2014). *120 Years of Thailand-Japan Relations [khwam samphan thai yipun 120 pi]*. Retrieved February 7, 2015, from www.th.emb-japan.go.jp/th/relation/index100.htm

Fernilluminati (2012, February 17). *Suan Sunantha in the Past [rueangraw suan sunantha nai adit]*. Retrieved February 11, 2015, from http://fernilluminati.blogspot.com.au/2012/02/blog-post_17.html

Gordon, Eleanor & Nair, Gwyneth (2003). *Public Lives: Women, Family, and Society in Victorian Britain*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.

Harrison, Rachel & Jackson, Peter (Eds). (2010). *The Ambiguous Allure of the West:*

Traces of The Colonial in Thailand. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Hunter, Eileen and Narisa Chakrabongse (1994). *Katya & The Prince of Siam.* Bangkok: Amarin Printing and Publishing.

Ikeya, Chie (2011). *Refiguring Women, Colonialism, and Modernity in Burma.* University of Hawai'i Press: Honolulu.

Jackson, Peter A. (2003). Performative Genders, Perverse Desires: A Bio-History of Thailand's Same- Sex and Transgender Cultures. *Intersections: Gender, History and Culture in the Asian Context* 9. Retrieved from http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue9/jackson.html

Jirawat Panyarachun (1997). *The Biography of The Works of La-iad Phibunsongkhram [chiwaprawat phon-ngan khong than-phuying La-iad Phibunsongkhram].* Bangkok: Dansattha Printing.

Jones, Robert (1971). *Thai Titles and Ranks: Including a Translation of Traditions of Royal Lineage in Siam by King Chulalongkorn.* Ithaca, New York: Cornell University.

Kamthon Liangsatchatham (2012). *Amdaeng* Muean's petition in the Forth reign [dika khong amdaeng Muean nai ratchakan thi si]. *Sinlapa Watthanatham,* 34(398), 72-91.

Kepner, Susan (1998). *A Civilized Woman: A Cultural Biography of M.L. Boonlua Thepyasuwan* (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation), University of California: Berkeley, USA.

Kongsakon Kawinraweekun (2002). *Constructing the body of Thai citizens during the Phibun regime of 1938-1944 [kan sang rangkai phonlamueang thai nai samai*

chomphon Po. Phubinsongkhram] (Unpublished M.A. thesis), Thammasat University, Thailand.

Kopkua Suwannathat-pian (1995). *Thailand's Durable Premier: Phibun through Three Decades 1932-1957*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.

Krasuang Sueksathikan (2010). *Thai History: Year 4-6 [prawattisat Thai: matthayom sueksa pi thi 4-6]*. Bangkok: Ministry of Education.

Krom Sinlapakon (1979). *Thai Society in the Fifth Reign [sangkhom thai samai ratchakan thi 5]*. Bangkok: Krom Sinlapakon.

Krom Sinlapakon (2004). *Important Women in Thai history [satri samkhan nai prawatisat thai]*. Bangkok: Krom Sinlapakon.

Kukrit Pramoj (1962). *Four Reigns [si phaendin]*. Bangkok: Duang Kamol.

Lalita & Suda et al (2008). *In commemoration of Phoonsuk Banomyong [huan-alai Phoonsuk Banomyong]*. Bangkok: Papyrus Publications.

Lawan Chotamara (1978). *First Love of King Rama the Fifth [rak raek khong ratchakan thi 5]*. Bangkok: Duang Kamon.

Lekha Aphaiwong (1983). *Story of Lek in Khunying Lekha Aphaiwong: In memorial of her royal cremation of Thursday, November 3, 1983 [rueang khong lek anuson nueang nai ngan phraratchathan phloeng sop khunying Lekha Aphaiwong]*. Bangkok.

Leonowens, Anna (1870). *The English Governess at the Siamese Court: Being Recollections of Six Years in the Royal Palace at Bangkok*. Boston: JR Osgood.

Leonowens, Anna (1873). *The Romance of the Harem*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.

Loos, Tamara (2005). Sex in the Inner City: The Fidelity between Sex and Politics in Siam. *The Journal of Asian Studies, 64*(4), 881-909.

Loos, Tamara (2006). *Subject Siam: Family, Law, and Colonial Modernity in Thailand.* Bangkok: Silkworms Books.

Lysa, Hong (1998). Of Consorts and Harlots in Thai Popular History. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 57(2), 333-353.

Lysa, Hong (2000). Twenty Years of 'Sinlapa Watthanatham': Cultural Politics in Thailand in the 1980s and 1990s. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies,* 31(1), 26-47.

Mani Siriwarasan (2002). *Life like a dream [chiwit muean fan].* Bangkok: Chuanphim.

Mattani Mojdara Rutnin (1988). *Modern Thai Literature.* Bangkok: Thammasat University Press.

McDonald, N. A. (1999). *A Missionary in Siam (1860-1870) by Rev. NA McDonald.* Bangkok: White Lotus.

Naewna (2013, February 16). *Vibhavadi Day [wan Vibhavadi].* Retrieved February 11, 2015, from http://www.naewna.com/lady/41650

Nakhon Ratchasima Province (2011). *History [Prawat].* Retrieved October 7, 2011, from http://www.NakhonRatchasima.go.th/nakhonrat/index.php?link=history&na=c4ca4238a0b923820dcc509a6f75849b

Nakhonsawan-woraphinit (1927). *Poetry of Queen Consort Sukhuman [Sukhuman Niphon].* Bangkok: Sophonphipatthanakon Printing.

National Council of Women (1978). *Thai Women [satri thai].* Bangkok: National Council of Women.

National Scout Organization of Thailand (2013). *In the Reign of King Rama VI [nai samai ratchakan thi hok]*. Retrieved October 7, 2013, from http://www.thaiscouting.com/history-of-scouting-in-thailand/http://www.scoutthailand.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=51&Itemid=79

Nuanchan Ratthanakon et al. (1977). *Wo. Na Pramuanmak: Princess Vibhavadi Rangsit [Wo. Na. Pramuanmak: phrachao-worawongthoe Vibhavadi Rangsit]*. Bangkok: Rungrueangrat Press.

Pairaya Ponsaratoon (2006). *Thai Women's Beauty Myth 1938-1973 [maya khathi khwamngam khong satri thai 2481-2516]* (M.A. thesis). Retrieved from ThaiLIS Thai Academic Reference Database.

Pawini Bunnag (2011). About Husbands and Wives Through Legal Cases From the Fifth Reign to the Seventh Reign [rueang phua phua mia mia nai samai ratchakan thi 5 theung ratchakan thi 7 phan kotmai khadikham lae dika]. *Sinlapa Watthanatham, 35*(5), 80-93.

Peleggi, Maurizio (2002). *Lords of Things: The Fashioning of the Siamese Monarchy's Modern Image*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Phairot Kanchanaphan (1975). *The Thai Government's Resistance to the Communist Propaganda: The Case Study of North-eastern Region [kan-totan kan-khotsanachuanchuea khong fai-khommunit doi ratthaban-thai: sueksa chapho korani phak tawan ok chiang nuea* (Published M.A. Thesis), Thammasat University, Thailand.

Phensupha Chai-in (2012). *The Mythical Love of Burengnong [ngeuan-ngam chamleoi-rak Burengnong].* Retrieved August 25, 2014, from http://botkwamdee.blogspot.com.au/2012/08/p-replac.html

Pia Malakun (1955). *Attributes of the Gentleman [sombat khong phudi].* Bangkok: The Teachers Council of Thailand.

Phitsanu Akkhaphin (2004). *Wang Lang For the Honour and Dignity of Women: Pride of Kunlasatri Wang Lang School-Watthana Academy [Wang Lang Watthana pheua kiat lae saksi khong satri: kham phakphumchai kunlasatri wang lang-watthana witthayalai].* Bangkok: Watthana Academy.

(*Krommamuen*) Phitthayalap Phruetthiyakon (1967). *Biography of Thao Worachan [prawat thao worachan].* Bangkok: Thailand's Society of Social Science Press.

Phonsiri Bunarakhet (1997). *Palace Women: Lives and Roles in Thai Society of Rama the Fifth's Reign [nang nai: chiwit lae botbat nai sangkhom thai samai ratchakan thi 5]* (M.A. Thesis). Available from ThaiLIS Thai Academic Reference Database.

Phuket Today (2006). *Highlight in Phuket*. Retrieved October 7, 2011, from http://www.phukettoday.com/hilight_eng.php?id=264

Phunphitsamai Diskul (1990). *Things I have seen: In the royal cremation of Princess Phunphitsamai Diskul [sing thi khaphachao phop hen: nai ngan phraratchathan phloeng sop momchao Phunphitsamai Diskul].* Bangkok: Watcharin Press.

Phunphitsamai Diskul (2001). *Things I have seen: the beginning [sing thi khaphachao phop hen, lem nueng].* Bangkok: Matichon.

Phunphitsamai Diskul (2003). *Things I have seen: the ending [sing thi khaphachao phop hen: phak chop].* Bangkok: Matichon.

Phunsang Sutabut (1983). *The Consort Sadap of King Chulalongkorn [chaochom mom-ratchawong Sadap nai ratchakan thi 5].* Bangkok: Amarin Printing and Publishing.

Phoonsuk Banomyong (1992). *The Many Roles in The Life of Phoonsuk Banomyong: Edited by Narut [lak bot chiwit thanphuying Phoonsuk Banomyong].* Bangkok: Amarin Printing.

Pridi Banomyong *(1972). Some Stories Related to the Royal Family During the Second World War [bang rueang kiao-kap phrabarommawongsanuwong nai rawang songkhram-lok khrang thi song].* Bangkok: Papyrus Publications.

Rajini School (n.d.). *History of Rajini School [prawat rong-rian rajini].* Retrieved February 7, 2015, from www.rajini.ac.th/history.html

Ratchabandittayasathan (1999). *Dictionary [photchananukrom chabap-ratchabandittayasathan].* Bangkok: Ratchabandittayasathan.

Reurnthai (2006). *Pictures of Thailand's Past 2 [phap meuangthai nai adit 2].* Retrieved February 5, 2015, from http://www.reurnthai.com/index.php?topic=1476.15

Reynolds, Craig J. (2006). *Seditious Histories of Siam: Contesting Thai and Southeast Asian Pasts.* Singapore: University of Washington Press.

Royjaithai (2009). *Queen Suriyothai [somdet-phra si Suriyothai].* Retrieved October 7, 2011, from http://www.royjaithai.com/phrasrisuriyotai.php

Saichol Satyanurak (2003). *Prince Damrong and the Creation of Thai Identity and Class of The Siamese [somdet kromphraya Damrong-Rachanuphap: kan sang attalak mueangthai lae chan khong chao sayam].* Bangkok: Matichon.

Saipin Kaewngamprasert (1995). *Politics behind the monument* of *Thao Suranari [kanmaung nai anusawari thao Suranari].* Bangkok: Matichon.

Samakhom Sit Wang Lang-Watthana Samai Pi 2005-2006 (2005). *In Commemoration of Miss Edna S. Cole: 150 Years of Watthana Academy's Founder, 2005-2006 [ramluek phrakhun Miss Edna S. Cole 150 pi phukotang watthana witthayalai].* Bangkok: Dan-sutthakanphim.

Sansani Werasinchai (2008). *Beloved Children and Wives [luk-kaew mia-khwan].* Bangkok: Matichon.

Sara Miphonkit (2008). *The Inner Court in the Ratthanakosin Period [ratchasamnak fai nai samai rattanakosin].* Bangkok: Amarin Printing and Publishing.

Sarakadee (2015). *108 Envelopes of Questions [108 song khamtham].* Retrieved February 5, 2015, from http://sarakadee.com/108/108thai/index.htm

Sasiwimon Santiratphakdi (2004). *Life of the Four Reigns [chak chiwit si phaendin].* Bangkok: Amarin Printing and Publishing.

Satcha Wathi (n.d.). *Phoonsuk's Declaration to The Court that Pridi Banomyong is Innocent [thanphuying Phoonsuk Banomyong poet-phoeuy to san nai Pridi Banomyong khue phu borisut].* Bangkok: Phatcharakan.

Somkhit Singsong (2010). *Both sides of Mekong River [khong song fang]*. Retrieved January, 25, 2015, from http://www.oknation.net/blog/kongsongfang/2010/11/08/entry-1

Somphop Chantharaprapha (1986). *Life and Works of Dokmaisot [chiwit lae ngan khong Dokmaisot]*. Bangkok: Bamrung-san Press.

Somphop Chantharaprapha (2012). *Queen Grandmother Sisawarinthira [somdetphra Sisawarinthira]*. Bangkok: Amarin Printing and Publishing.

Sujira Aroonpipat (2007). *The Political Economy of the Beauty Contest: Case study of Miss Thailand Contest [setthasat-kanmueang wa duaykan phalit nang-ngam: korani-sueksa kan prakuat nagsao-thai]* (M.A. thesis). Available from ThaiLIS Thai Academic Reference Database.

Sujit Wongthes (2001). *Who is Queen Suriyothai and Where is She From? [phra Suriyothai pen khrai? ma chak nai?]*. Bangkok: Matichon.

Sukanya Jiamviset (2005). *An Analysis of Thai Educational System from Literature during the Early Rattanakosin Period in the Reigns of King Rama 1-3 [wikhro rabop kan-sueksa thai chak wannakadi samai ratthanakosin ton ton nai samai ratchakan thi 1-ratchakan thi 3]* (Unpublished M.Ed. thesis), Graduate School, Srinakharinwirot University, Thailand.

Sukolrat Tharasak (2013). Her Majesty Sri Bajarindra, the Queen Mother in Dr. Malcolm Smith's Perspective [Somdet Phra Sri Bajarindra nai thatsana khong mo Smith]. *Sinlapakon, 56*(2).

Sulak Sivaraksa (1986). *Interview with Princess Chongchitthanom Diskul [samphat momchao Chongchitthanom Diskul]*. Bangkok: Charoenwit kanphim.

Sunai Ratchaphantharak (1985). *200 Years of Thalang's City Women Warriors [200 pi wirasatri meuang thalang].* Phuket: Victory Powerpoint.

Surachet Suklarpkit (2014). The Monogamy of the Nation [phua dieaw mia dieaw haeng chat]. *Sinlapa Watthanatham, 35*(413), 80-109.

Sutthikhun Kongthong (2007). *The Guardian of the Famous: Nalini Phaibun [sarana khon-dang: Nalini Phaibun].* Retrieved August 25, 2014, from http://www.oknation.net/blog/print.php?id=175732

Suwadee Tanaprasitpatana (1989). *Thai society's expectations of women, 1851-1935* (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation), University of Sydney, Australia.

Tat Prathipasen (1974). Kunlasatri Wang Lang School and Miss Cole *[rong-rian kunlasatri wang lang kap maem Cole]* Bangkok.

Thai Film Foundation (n.d.). *Learning about Field Marshal Phibun from Films [rianru chomphon Po. chak phapphayon]* Retrieved October 10, 2013, from http://www.thaifilm.com/forumDetail.asp?topicID=3928&page=5&keyword=

Thaipost (June 28, 2009). *Heiress of Field Marshal Phibun: Jirawat Panyarachun [thayat chomphon po Jirawat Panyarachun].* Retrieved December 17, 2012, from http://www.thaipost.net/node/6921

Thai Veterans (n.d.). Monuments. Retrieved August 25, 2014, from http://www.thaiveterans.mod.go.th/wvoth/web_munement1/Binder1.pdf

Thak Chaloemtiarana (1978). Reflections of the Sarit Regime and the Process of Political Change in Thailand: Some Conceptual and Theoretical Reassessments. *Southeast Asian Studies, 16* (3), 400-410. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/2433/55928.

Thanapon Thabtim (2005). *The Roles of the Brothers of St Gabriels in Thai Education, 1901-2001 [botbat khong pharada khana sain Gabriel to kan sueksa nai prathet thai pho. so. 2444-2544]* (Unpublished M.Ed. thesis), Graduate School, Srinakharinwirot University, Thailand.

Thepchu Thapthong (2003). *Thai Women in the Past [phuying thai nai adit]*. Bangkok: Suwiriyasarn Press.

The Secretariat of the Senate (n.d.). *The Senate: Members of 1946 [wutthisapha chutthi song: samachik wutthisapha pho. so. 2489]*. Retrieved February 12, 2011, from http://www.senate.go.th/inforcenter/

The Royal Institute (2007). *Knowledge: kun, sakun, trakun, wong [khlang khwamru: kun, sakun, trakun, wong]*. Retrieved December 21, 2014, from http://www.royin.go.th/th/knowledge/detail.php?ID=966

Thommayanti (1971). *Under the Royal Umbrella [Romchat]*. Bangkok: Khlang Witthaya.

Thongchai Winichakul (1994). *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-body of a Nation*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Thongchai Winichakul (2000). The Quest for "Siwilai": A Geographical Discourse of Civilisational Thinking in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Siam. *The Journal of Asian Studies, 59* (3), 528-549.

Thongchai Winichakul (2001). Royal Nationalism in Thai Historiography [Prawattisat thai baep racha-chatniyom]. *Sinlapa Watthanatham, 23*(1), 56-65.

Thongchai Winichakul (2014, April 22). *Conceptualising Thai-self under Royalist Provincialism*. Opening Keynote Address presented at 12th International Conference of Thai Studies, University of Sydney, Australia.

Thongthong Chantharangsu (1989). *Inside the Crystal Wall [nai kamphaeng kaew.* Bangkok: Ruamsan.

Trisin Bunkhachon (2006). *The Novels of 'Dokmaisot' and Development of Thai Fiction [nawaniyai khong 'Dokmaisot' kap kan phattanakan nawaniyai thai]* (Journal article). Available from Center for Literary Studies, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand. Retrieved from http://www.phd-lit.arts.chula.ac.th/Download/article2.pdf

Ubonwan Pitiphatthanakhosit & Uayphon Phanit (1989). *100 Years of Women's Magazines 1888-1988* (Research report). Available from ThaiLIS Thai Academic Reference Database.

Vickery, Amanda (2009). Golden age to separate spheres? A review of the categories and chronology of English women's history. *The Historical Journal, 36* (2), 383-414.

Wanchai Tantiwitthayaphitak (n.d.). *One Period of Phoonsuk Banomyong's Life [chuang nueng haeng chiwit thanphuying Phoonsuk Banomyong].* Retrieved January 29, 2015, from http://www.sarakadee.com/feature/2000/04/poonsook.htm

Wanglang Watthana Alumni Association (n.d.). *The Root: Harriet House [rak kaew: mam Harriet House].* Retrieved February 7, 2015, from www.wanglangwattana.org/taproots_mrshouse.html

Wannaphon Bunyasatit (2009). *Powerful Women of Siam: in the Reigns of Rama 4 – Rama 6 and the Wave of Western Cultural Influence [chomnang haeng sayam nai samai ratchakan thi 4 thueng ratchakan thi 6 kap krasae watthanatham tawantok].* Bangkok: Sangsan Books.

Waruni Osatharom (1981). *Education in Thai Society 1868-1932 [kan sueksa nai sangkhom thai 2411-2475]* (Unpublished M.A. thesis), Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand.

Weinbaum, A. E., Thomas, L. M., Ramamurthy, P, Poiger, U. G., Dong, M. Athibodi., & Barlow, T. E. (Eds.). (2008). *The Modern Girl around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalisation*. Duke University Press: Durham & London.

Wibul Wichitwathakarn (1999). *Siamese Women in the Past [satri sayam nai adit].* Bangkok: Sangsan Books.

Wichit Watthakan (1980). *Blood of Suphan: Plays and Biography [lueat suphan: ruam bot lakhon prawat-phon-ngan].* Bangkok: Soemwit Bannakhan.

Wimonmat Paruechakun (2006). *The Women of Dokmaisot [phuying khong dokmaisot]* (Journal article). Available from Center for Literary Studies, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand. Retrieved from http://www.phd-lit.arts.chula.ac.th/Download/article7.pdf

Wo. Na. Pramuanmak (1953). *Pritsana [Pritsana].* Bangkok: Odien Store.

Wo. Na. Pramuanmak (1971). *Rattanawadi [Rattanawadi].* Bangkok: Phraephitthaya.

Wutthichai Munsin (1973). *Education Reform in the Reign of King Rama the Fifth [kanpatirup sueksa nai ratchakan thi 5]*. Bangkok: Samakhom Sangkhommasat haeng Prathet Thai.

Wyatt, David (1969). *The Politics of Reform in Thailand: Education in the Reign of King Chulalongkorn*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Wyatt, David (1984). *Thailand: A Short History*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.

Yupphaphon Chaengchenkit (1987). Education of Thai Women: Case Study of Rachini School 1901-1960 *[kan-sueksa khong satri thai: korani sueksa rong-rian rachini 2444- 2503]* (Unpublished M.A. thesis), Bangkok, Thammasat University, Thailand.

Yuwadi Siri (2011a). Dissolved, Separated, and Moved, Until Today: 111 Years of Satri Witthaya [yup yaek yai kwachatueng wanni 111 pi satri witthaya]. *Sinlapa Watthanatham, 32*(383), 38-43.

Yuwadi Siri (2011b). The First Missionary Schools for Boys and Girls in Siam [rong-rian mitchannari chai-ying haeng raek nai sayam]. *Sinlapa Watthanatham, 32*(384), 40-47.

Yuwadi Siri (2011c). 104 Years of St- Joseph Convent and Female Catholic School of Siam [104 pi St-Joseph Convent kap rong-rian catholic ying nai prathet sayam] *Sinlapa Watthanatham, 33*(385), 46-51.

Films

Chatrichalerm Yukol (Director). (2001). *Suriyothai* [Drama]. Thailand: Sahamonkol Film.

Worayut Phichaisorathat (Director. (2004). *Suphankanlaya* [Drama]. Thailand: Media of Media Company Limited.